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DISCOURSES UPON HOLY SCRIPTURE

BY

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THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK.

Chapter i. 1-8.

1. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;
2. As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.
3. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
4. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.
5. And there went out unto him all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.
6. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;
7. And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.
8. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

THE THREEFOLD BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL.

THE gospel may be said to have three beginnings, and yet it is perfectly correct to say that each beginning has a speciality and completeness of its own. The beginning of the gospel is, of course, to be found in the thought and love of God. We may cast our lines back as far as we can through the ages of eternity, and we shall never be able to find the point at which God's concern for the welfare of the universe that was to be first began, and yet the Lamb of God is said to have been slain from before the foundation of the world. The sacrifice of Christ was not an afterthought on the part of the Divine Being; it was, so to speak, part of himself, an element of his very Godhead and of his very existence. So that, if we are really to go

back to what may be termed the beginning of beginnings, we shall have to search the depths of the divine existence, and follow all the wonderful and infinite course of the divine thinking and purpose and love. There, of course, we are lost. Our hearts can only point, as it were, towards that great solemn mystery. Explanation we have none. Special indication is entirely beyond our power. We are lost in wonder, and our wonder is lost in speechlessness.

But there was what may be termed a second beginning of the gospel, and it is to that event that the gospel before us relates. The second beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is found in the incarnation of God's Son. We begin the next time at Bethlehem. We were lost when it was a mere question of unuttered and in speech unutterable love. We only begin to think and to feel and to understand in part God's meaning, when he utters his love not in speech, but in the person, the flesh and blood of God's dear Son. We can begin there—little children can begin at that point; our love can commence its study at the cradle of our Lord Jesus Christ. Creatures like ourselves need alphabets, beginnings, sharp lines, visibilities. We are not all mind; we cannot dwell upon the abstract, the unconditioned, the absolute, the infinite, in matters of this kind. We need some one to look at, to speak to, to go up to quite closely, and to hear speak the language of the love of God. This is what may be termed the second beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But Jesus Christ himself went away. That beginning was, so to speak, taken from us. Where, then, are we to look for the third beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? We look for it in the Church. As he was, so are we to be in the world. We are to be "living epistles, known and read of all men." When men ask, "Where is Christ?" we are to show them Christianity. And when they ask, "What is Christianity?" we are to show them the Church—meanwhile, indeed, an incomplete representation of the truth, yet Jesus Christ himself claims it, and upon the Church devolves the responsibility not only of bearing his name by exemplifying his life, but of interpreting his

doctrine and living upon his love. So, then, we do not treat the Church as a mere accident; we do not regard even the visible Church as something that is of the nature of an ordinary human association. It is more than a society; it is more than a club; more than a confraternity based upon kindred social sympathies. It is the embodied doctrine and love of Christ; and in so far as it falls short of that embodiment, it has yet to be crucified, purged with fire, and searched by the light of God. Is it not the same with all great sublime far-reaching life? Yonder is a man sitting alone with closed eyes, yet the vision of his soul is fastened upon a wondrous picture. He is looking at a great poem built in stone, at a piece of wondrous thinking, having great foundations, far-ascending and glittering pinnacles or majestic domes. It is all in his mind. At present it is nothing but a thought. He is an architect. He has a cathedral in his brain, and he sees it, every line—sees the great gaping places dug out for the foundations, sees the courses of great rough unpolished stone—sees the building rising into shape, into presence, into meaning, into awfulness—petrified poesy. But that is not enough for him. Now he draws his plan. He gives the thought visibility; he interprets it to duller brains; he calls in what may be termed, without offence, a secondary order of intellect—not the dreaming and poetic intellect, that creates new heavens and new earths and lives in continued newness of beauty,—he calls in the power that can give expression and visibleness to great ideas, and he is not content until he sees this thought of his built up in all its grandeur and completeness; and even then, if he be a true artist, if the divine fire of art be really in him, he wants something more. He does not content himself with looking at the great stone-work; he wants to see the purpose for which that stone-work was put up carried out, in so far as he himself is a complete man and works upon complete ideas. There is to be an inner cathedral, a human cathedral, a cathedral of praises, a cathedral of living worshippers. Probably he does not in all cases reach that third idea, but that third idea ought to be consequential upon the other two; and is, in the up-building of the great cathedral which God himself is to inhabit—first, his own great speechless, silent, infinite, universe-encompassing love, and then his visible Son, and then his redeemed Church, and then

the Cathedral of Praise which the Holy One of Israel is to inhabit throughout eternity.

As it is written in the prophets, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." The divine dispensations have all been progressive. You cannot point to a single backward step in the divine thinking, in the divine movement. This Book, the book of inspiration, the Book of God, goes right forward. There is progress, but not progress by correction—progress by development, by natural expansion—the tree coming out of the seed, and the seed only lost when the tree has reached the fulness of the divine intent. This is a legitimate test of all truth, a legitimate test of every ministry and a legitimate test of every Christian life. The question which may be fairly put about the Bible and about all life, all ministries and all churches, is this, "What of their progressiveness?" If a man is the same to-day that he was twenty years ago, he is growing downwards, and is really not the same man that he was twenty years ago. A man must be double the man he was twenty years ago, or there is something wrong in him. If you say he preaches exactly as he did a quarter of a century since, then he was a poor preacher to begin with, and he has become worse and worse as the years have rolled away. I fasten this inquiry upon the Book of God, and I will stake great results upon it. What of its progressiveness? How did divine revelation begin? How has it proceeded? How did it culminate? Is the culmination of the divine truth of the same nature and quality as the beginning, or is there disjunction, is there vital separation? And everything will depend upon the answer that can be returned to these inquiries. We claim on a Christian basis, and for Christian purposes, that all the dispensations have been progressive and culminative and climacteric, and the last point of the series is of the same quality as the first. This is a great mystery, but it is an unanswerable argument. Here you have the prophets living their tumultuous, exciting, bewildering life—great men to-day by reason of special divine visitation, by reason of having been called away suddenly by the Spirit of God, shown wondrous sights, and having their

ears opened to wondrous sounds—and to-morrow, weak as common men, if not weaker, by reason of the terrible reaction—thrown down, shattered, unable to make anything of the world or of their strange life. God then, in the first instance, has his prophets in the world—men that lived less in the present than in the future, men, therefore, who were continually being subjected to tests of a capricious and arbitrary kind, but never responding to such demands—men who by reason of living in the future were subjected to continual misjudgment and misapprehension. Oh! but theirs was a sad life at times. To have little or no connection with the men that are round about you, to have a heart that cannot understand or thinks it unworthy of understanding the little things that go to make up the present dying hour; to be in existence to-day, and yet to be breathing the atmosphere of centuries to come,—that was a test of life that was almost a divine judgment upon those strange men the prophets.

Then after the prophets we have a voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare." We have John the Baptist, and of John the Baptist it is said that he was sent before the face of the Redeemer,—"Behold, I send my messenger before thy face.' He was next to the face, the presence, of the coming One. The prophets were centuries away from him, but this man was all but a transparent veil; they could almost see the coming God through him. He went immediately before the face. If he stood aside but for a moment there was the One that was to come. And oh! what a burden he carried who had the breath of the predicted One breathed upon him as he was going through his introductory ministry. Now the question is, how to get from Malachi to Matthew? Almighty God has so trained the world by prophecy, by type, by figure, by ritualism, by manifold discipline, that he has made the world very impatient for the next step. How to get from the Old Testament into the New?—that is the great question; how to get from the one dispensation in its final phase, into another dispensation that shall satisfy an impatient, necessitous world. Where is your human genius there? Shut up this New Testament and deal with the Old Testament alone, and I say, now how are you to write a testament that shall be New,

and yet of the nature of the Old, that shall answer all the questions suggested by the Old, and satisfy the impatience which has been wrought in the hungry heart of man by the manifold system of training which the Divine Being has adopted? Unfortunately for this point of the inquiry, we know how the New Testament opens, and our familiarity with it becomes our weakness. Forget if you can for one moment how the New Testament opens. Read from Genesis to Malachi, and then ask yourselves this question: Now what can be done that shall not throw us back; that shall make the best possible use of the elements we have gathered; that shall move not on a side, not upon a tangential line, but that shall move upon some straight line, and carry it forward to a natural and satisfactory climax? Will men put their genius to the torment that will impose upon them—how to write a testament, when for so many centuries we have got an old one? We have got almost tired of writing now. Almighty God hath wrought us up almost into an angry mood. We are now jealous, impatient, strained to the highest tension, and if we step one point backwards, it is to us atheism, defiance, and hell if need be. What will he do? We have had prophecy, we have had great temples, we saw the procession of the priests, we have watched the sacrifices, always beginning, never ending, or ending only to begin again; but we are tired of that now, and we in this excited, strained, impatient, anxious, wondering temper say, "How will God go on next?" Oh, I dare hardly turn the page over; it seems that in the turning of this page our destiny is being turned, is being settled for good or evil. What can come after prophets and minstrels and priests, mighty but insufficient interpreters of the divine purpose? Now I turn the page and I find this solution—"Emmanuel, God with us," and the artist that is in me, the idealist that is in me, as well as the sinner that is in me, says, "It is enough!" My Lord and my God! Yes, we could not have written in mere words a New Testament. The world could not have borne that; but when the New Testament was written in the flesh and blood of God himself, and the man that spoke to us was Emmanuel, a man that could stoop like a mother and look like a God—It is enough!

And John said, "I indeed have baptised you with water: but

he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost." The crowning dispensation must be spiritual. "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost." There cometh a time in all study when we want to get clear of mere formulæ, and mere lines and laborious and intricate processes, and we want to have that mental dominance which brings us into constant recognition and appreciation of the truth. We get tired of looking, we get tired of using powers that were intended to be merely temporary. The Divine Being comes to us, and turns our religion from a process of looking and inquiry and hard service into spiritual life, spiritual love, until we know what it is to have the power of instantly going to God, and of holding, as it were, face-to-face communion and fellowship with him. That is, if we be baptised with the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost takes hold of the highest faculties of our nature and works with these alone. The body falls off. All that was instrumental and of the nature of agency fades and drops away, and we come into mind-power, moral power, spiritual mastery; and things which aforetime were difficult, and almost impossible to us, become easy and natural, and communion with God becomes the very breath of our souls.

What, then, of the subject as it has thus been hinted at? If we have in any degree laid hold of its meaning, it is evident that the subject addresses a word in the first place to students. Here is a revelation to be studied, and we shall only be wise masters in this art in proportion as we have a grasp of the whole. Our theology must not be angular but circular; it must not be beautiful in one or two places, it must be complete. We must understand every dispensation by itself and in its relation to the succeeding order of things; otherwise we shall be thrown about by everybody who chooses to play legerdemain with us. We shall have questions put to us that we cannot answer, and difficulties which we might otherwise count as trifles will be mountainous and insuperable. We must get into that state of mind that sees the beginning and that sees the end, and grasps the extremes, so far as it is possible for limited life so to grasp them. There are many men who are very clever at certain points, but take them away from those points, and they are shorn Samsons—any child can trifle with them. No, we must,

if we are to be successful and useful students and ministers of these holy mysteries, have something like a grasp of the whole; and though we may not be able to answer special difficulties and peculiar inquiries, yet, as in the spiritual life so in the intellectual regions, we shall bring the power of the endless to bear upon the difficulties that are momentary. I confess, after having done my best to study this Book, that I am most impressed by its unity, its completeness, by the inter-relation of part to part, so that if I touch one point I break up its completeness, I impair and injure its wondrous beauty. There are points where I am dumb—mysteries that I cannot shed any light upon, and from which I cannot extract one explanatory word—but when I look at the whole, the complete dispensations of God, I find their very completeness one of the most convincing and determining arguments.

Here is a lesson to Churches. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" It was reserved for you specially to be baptised by the Holy Spirit. Are you still lingering among the prophets? You are not in Christ if so be ye have not received the Holy Ghost. Do you tell me you are busy gathering what you may from the lightning-scarred slopes of Sinai? I say Sinai! A fragment of the past! It is now, What of Calvary and what of Olivet and what of the Church, the temple into which the Holy Ghost came as baptising fire? No man is at liberty to live backwards. If the prophets underwent misjudgment and torment by reason of having to live in the future, what shall be said of those poor rickety creatures who are always trying to go back into the dim past, to exhume the prophets, and to live three or four centuries behind their privileges? The whole judgment now is a judgment of the Holy Ghost, not what questions can we answer, nor what histories have we considered and mastered? but what about the inward baptism, the baptism of fire, the baptism of life, the gift of the spirit of interpretation and the spirit of purity? These are the searching questions which become to us terrible as the judgment of Almighty God.

Here is a lesson to pioneers. John was a herald, and John knew the position to which he was called, and he never tres-

passed the limits of his vocation. When he spoke he did not speak in his own name, he did not draw attention to himself; he always spoke of the One mightier than he, who was immediately coming. And what are we, whether we be ministers or teachers or parents or churches, what are we really so far as our service goes but pioneers, those who shall prepare for and point out the One mightier than ourselves? If for a moment John had supposed himself to be the Messiah, what a shock and what terrible results would have followed! Men must know their power, men must know their calling, and when a man knows his limitations it is surprising how mighty a weak man is. Keep him within his own province, bind him to his own mission, and within his proper boundaries, he is a prince and a son of God; but let him get beyond that line, and he is captured as an intruder or is slain as a spy. Let us know what is meant by our position as pioneers. If the frame-maker should ever take it into his head that he is the artist, what an anti-climax would be perpetrated! If April should ever take it into its head that it can do the work of August, what a block there would be in the process of the year!

We are called to different positions in the Church. God hath set some in the Church pastors, prophets, evangelists, teachers, helps, governors, every one as it pleaseth him. What then? We are not to devour one another, we are not to envy one another, we are not to say hard, cruel, unkind, depreciatory words about one another; a man must find out what God intended him to be in the course of his dispensation, and if he be that, however humble the position, he will have resting upon him the ever-sustaining and ever-comforting blessing of God. Are you an evangelist? I glorify God in you; do not try to be anything else. Have you in you the consciousness that you can be something else, something that you think higher? First of all I do not know that it is higher—I do not know that there is anything higher in the Church than being an evangelist, one who preaches the Gospel here and there and wheresoever opportunity is given him, or he himself can make opportunity for the proclamation of it. But if it has got into you that you can do something higher, be careful, make it a matter of profound

religious inquiry before you step out of the position you are now in. Are you a pastor? I glorify God in you; I long for, I almost covet your powers. You have such a way of dropping your voice so that the dullest can hear you, and the weakest are made glad by your presence; you can put so much truth into so few words, that one covets, with a godly covetousness, your rich and most fruitful gifts. Do not try to be anything else, merely for the sake of change. If there be in you another calling, God in his own time and in his own way will make it quite clear to you. Are you labouring in a village, and does it ever enter into your head that you would like to labour in London? You had better not; you had better not entertain that notion; it hath driven some men almost crazy, and it is a very perilous thing to play with—a notion of that kind, that a man is adapted to Metropolitan life when probably he is adapted to nothing of the sort. "To fill up the sphere we have" should be our duty and our joy. "It is only a nutshell." Well, then, it will take less filling. "It is only a little village." Well, then, you will make your work the more manifest and the more speedy. I do not say that every man is to ab de just where he is—nothing of the kind; but whilst he is there he is bound by every consideration than can stir a true man's heart and strength to make the very best of his position.

Here is a lesson to inquirers. If I have read this Book aright, I find that it is a shut volume; it is now complete; there is nothing more to be written. If you are waiting for something else, I feel it incumbent upon me, as the result of my own studies, to say in my own name that the vision is closed, and there is nothing more to come. What more can you possibly want? The prophets have been here, flaming men, men with voices like trumpets and thunder—they have been here. The minstrels, men of poesy, dreaming men, men who had eyes that could see visions in the night-time—they have been here. They are gone. Priests have been here, men who shed blood, and who explained the meaning of the blood which they shed, who built the altars and officiated at those altars—they have been here, and they have gone. And John the Baptist, the preliminary man, the man who went immediately before the Face—he

has been here and gone. And Emmanuel has been here—"God with us." And the Holy Ghost is come to us. What more can there be to wait for? If this cannot satisfy us, then what will appease our hunger? He must be a bold man that can elbow and cleave and force his way to hell through prophets and priests and psalmists and Baptists, and God's Son and God the Holy Ghost, and then say, as he takes the last plunge, "There was not enough given me; I was waiting for something else, and that something else never came." Will you risk that? Have you made the best of what has been given? Are you really masters of the Book of God, able to understand its scope and its meaning? Oh, see to it, that there is not some little or great pebble of selfishness over which you are just going to topple into darkness and ruin and death. O thou, who madest the eyes of the heart, anoint the eyes of our love, that we may see thee, and be fascinated by thy beauty for ever. Amen.

NOTE.

"Mark, who, besides his Latin name of *Marcus*, appears to have had the Hebrew name of *John*, was the son of Mary, a pious woman at Jerusalem, who received in her house the assemblies of the primitive church, and welcomed the Apostle Peter after his deliverance out of prison by the angel (Acts xii. 12). Mark was the nephew of Barnabas, Paul's companion in his travels (Col. iv. 10). These two, being at Jerusalem about the time of Peter's deliverance, took Mark with them upon their mission (Acts xii. 25). He accompanied them to Antioch; and thence, on their first journey, as far as Perga in Pamphylia; where he left them, and returned to Jerusalem (Acts xiii. 5, 13). We afterwards find him at Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas, desiring to accompany them on a second journey; but Paul, regarding him as unfit for the work, since he had left them on the former occasion, was unwilling to take him. This decision caused a warm dispute and a temporary separation between the two apostles; and Barnabas, influenced probably by his affection for his kinsman, 'took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.' There can be no doubt that Mark afterwards acknowledged his error, whatever it was—whether he was wanting in the courageous self-denial of the missionary, or had misgivings on the extension of the gospel to the heathen—for the Apostle Paul appears to have given him his confidence and affection, and commends him to the church. See Col. iv. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 11; Philem. 24.

"To these notices, gathered from the sacred writers, others add that Mark afterwards went to Egypt; and, having planted a church at Alexandria, died there."—ANGUS'S *Bible Handbook*.

Chapter i. 9-45.

SPIRITUAL REPARATION.

[An Analysis.]

9. And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

(1) JOHN'S dispensation was thus shown to be of divine appointment. Notice the beauty of John's work in relation both to the past and to the future: it was a baptism unto repentance; a baptism, and so connected with the ceremonial past;—a baptism unto repentance, and so introductory to a new and more intensely spiritual state of things.

(2) But why should Jesus Christ identify himself with a baptism which was unto repentance? His identification with that baptism was not for the purpose of personal confession, but for the purpose of official absorption. He took up the dispensation, and ended it by the introduction of a better. So, when he took upon himself the nature of mankind, he did not degrade and enfeeble God, he elevated and glorified man.

10. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him.

11. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Whatever is done in the divine name and for the divine glory is succeeded by increasing evidence of divine favour. What Jesus saw on coming out of the water, we should all see on returning from every act of homage and obedience. (1) The Spirit is a heavenly gift, not a natural grace. (2) Sonship is not generic; it is specific—thou. (3) Sonship is not left a mystery; it is declared and confirmed to the individual heart.

12. And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

13. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

(1) Sonship does not exempt from temptation. (2) Temptation does not invalidate sonship. (3) Temptation, rightly answered, makes sonship a life and power. We are not to be content with nominal sonship. We are to be proved men. Contrast Matthew's account of the Temptation with Mark's. The one is minute and elaborate; the other is compendious. What history may be put into a sentence! There are experiences which cannot be put into words—they can only be hinted at. Some men have not the power of spiritual analysis; they cannot follow a temptation through its changing assaults and attitudes. Mark was probably not equal to Matthew in this particular. As with temptation, so with conversion. Some men can only say that they are converted; explanation and discussion are beyond their power. "And the angels ministered unto him." The darkest temptation has some light to relieve it. When we feel the devil we should look for the angels.

14. Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.

15. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

(1) The imprisonment of the servant does not hinder the progress of the Master. (2) Ill-treatment of the messenger may actually help the divinity of the message: (*a*) it tests sincerity, (*b*) it tests the sustaining power of the doctrine that is preached.

The 15th verse shows Jesus Christ in three aspects: (1) as the interpreter of time; (2) as the revealer of the divine kingdom; (3) as a spiritual regenerator. Under these heads note—

Time: The preparative process; the development of opportunity; the moral import of special times.

Kingdom: Not a transient erection; not a subordinate arrangement; not a human ambition—the kingdom of God.

Regeneration: Vital; progressive; spiritual. Vital—Repent, destroy the past, humble yourselves on account of sin. Progressive—after humiliation is to come trust, the broken heart is to be the believing heart. Spiritual—not a change of mere attitudes and relations, but a change of life.

It is to be specially noted that Jesus Christ preached the kingdom of God as a gospel: rightly understood, it is not a

despotism, it is not a terror; it is the supremacy of light, of truth, of love.

16. Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

17. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

19. And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

20. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

(1) Christ is the preparer of his servants—"I will make you": how much was involved in that promise! (*a*) Authority; (*b*) qualification. (2) Small beginnings compatible with sublime results. (3) The claims of God over-ride all other claims—the sons left their father. (4) The discharge of common duties the best preparation for higher calls—two were casting the net into the sea, and two were mending their nets. The transition from one duty to another need not be abrupt. The humblest duty may be very near the highest honour. (5) The place of the servant is after the Master—"Come ye after me": they are not invited to equal terms—they must walk in the King's shadow.

Some hearts respond to Christ instantly—some linger long, and yield, as it were, with reluctance.

"They left their father Zebedee in the ship": fathers should never keep back their sons from Christ's service.

21. And they went into Capernaum: and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

22. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

(1) Men will teach well only as they teach under Christ. (2) Authority is impossible apart from association with the Master. (3) Authority of tone must come from intensity of conviction. (4) Hearers know the voice of authority. (5) The Christian teacher is to show his supremacy over all other teachers.

23. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

24. Saying Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

25. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.
26. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.
27. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.
28. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

(1) Wickedness always afraid of purity. (2) Wickedness having no favour to ask of purity, except to be let alone. (3) Wickedness can always identify the presence of the spirit of Jesus Christ. (4) For this reason, the Church is a constant judgment upon all unclean spirits. (5) The completeness of Jesus Christ's authority—his authority in doctrine, and his authority in work. (6) Fulness of spiritual life is the guarantee of fulness of spiritual power. Jesus Christ came to this work after the most complete and severe preparation. He had received the Holy Ghost; he had undergone special and long-continued temptation in the wilderness, and had returned to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God; and after all this he encountered with perfect power the unclean spirits that were in men. This opens the whole subject of Spiritual Preparation. Christians have also to meet unclean spirits in society. What if these unclean spirits should baffle the imperfect strength of Jesus Christ's followers? Christians are not at liberty to let unclean spirits alone; they are called to a life-long contention; their preparation must be intensely and increasingly spiritual. (7) That is the highest fame which is associated with beneficent deeds. Jesus Christ became famous because he had destroyed the dominion of a wicked spirit. The fame of evil is infamous; the fame of selfish cunning is mere notoriety; the fame of good doing is immortal and blessed renown.

This paragraph may be used as the basis of a discourse upon First Efforts in Christian service. (1) Those efforts are often forced upon Christians—it was so in this case; the wicked spirit challenged the attention of Christ. (2) Christians are to seek opportunities of putting forth such efforts; they are not to wait for the challenge, they have also to give it.

29. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

30. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

31. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

Jesus Christ exercised both a public and a private ministry; he worked in the synagogue, he worked also in the domestic circle. Here is Simon's wife's mother sick of the fever, and instantly Jesus Christ addressed himself to the difficulty, showing that the Christian ministry may be exercised with great advantage alike in public and in private. Learn from it: (1) That the individual case, as well as the case of the multitude, should be regarded as worthy of attention. (2) That bodily diseases as well as spiritual ailments are within the sphere of our solicitude; we are to be philanthropic as well as spiritually-minded. (3) We are to put ourselves in personal contact with those who suffer. "Jesus took her by the hand, and lifted her up." We can do little by proxy. We must work with our own hand, as though everything depended on it. It is true that what is distinctly known as miraculous power has ceased in the Church, yet there is a higher power than that which works physical miracles. It is still possible for the entrance of a good man into any house to be as the coming in of the light and life of heaven. Christians have it in their power to do a great work in the sick chamber. The raising of the man towards heaven is a greater work than healing him of mere bodily disease. We should never leave a home without blessing it. When Jesus Christ entered into a house it was known that he was there; his were not mere visits of courtesy, or attention to the claims of routine; wherever he went he took with him healing and manifold spiritual blessings. We are to do the same thing according to our capacity. In this case we see the servants standing behind the Master; Simon and Andrew and James and John were all there, but Jesus alone did the work. In our case, if we are the public figures in any work of mercy, it is only because our Master is concealed from the common vision. He is still there, still first; and it is only as we realise his presence and position that we can bless men.

The immediateness of Christ's cures ought to have some moral suggestion in it. Simon's wife's mother did not gradually recover from her affliction; she was cured instantly, and showed the extent of her recovery by immediately ministering to those who were in her house. In the spiritual world, why should not Jesus Christ heal men as suddenly as in the physical world? When men are spiritually healed, how long should they be before they make an attempt to serve others? It is quite true that there may be precipitancy in this matter of spiritual ministry; at the same time it should be remembered that every healed soul should prove its life by seeking to do some good thing for those who are round about. Here, as in everything else, the law holds good—By their fruits ye shall know them. Jesus Christ did not require that any body of men should examine the case to which he had just devoted himself, in order to procure a testimonial of efficiency; the service which the healed sufferer rendered was itself testimonial enough. We know that men have been with Christ when they are doing Christ's work: all other signs are inadequate; this is the absolute standard.

32. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

33. And all the city was gathered together at the door.

34. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

The natural sun set, but the Sun of righteousness arose upon all those people with healing in his wings. In the evening, as well as in the morning, Jesus Christ was at work. Men come to Jesus Christ according to the urgency of their want. These people felt that urgency in their physical nature rather than in their souls, consequently they approached Christ with a request that they might be healed. It is well if men can feel their want of Christ at any point. If men did but know it, they would find in their hunger and thirst, in their suffering and loss, grounds of appeal to Jesus Christ. It is not easy to work from the highest point of nature: men may not be conscious of great spiritual necessities, yet may feel wants of a lower kind; they begin with the lower and ascend to the higher; they who eat of the loaves and fishes should not leave Christ until they have eaten of the bread from heaven.

We are not to consider all this pressure upon Jesus Christ as an illustration of mere selfishness on the part of the sufferers and their friends. That would entirely depend upon their spirit; in the act of their coming to Christ there was nothing necessarily selfish. Men may come to Christ for spiritual advantages, and yet may charge themselves with selfish motives; at all events, the devil will not be slow to suggest that in coming to Christ for salvation men merely act upon a selfish instinct. Such an unclean spirit is to be resisted, and to bring down upon itself the admonition of holy anger. The selfishness will be seen afterwards if it really exists; to go to Christ that we should be healed ourselves, and then to say nothing about his gracious power to others, is to exhibit the intensest selfishness; but to go ourselves, and then make our own healing testimony in his favour, is to preach the Gospel, is to approach the benevolence of God himself.

By so much then may men test their own spirit; if they are content to enjoy what they term spiritual advantages without publishing the Saviour to others, they are justly chargeable with the most criminal selfishness. Gratitude will always make eloquent preachers.

The fact that Jesus Christ did not suffer the devils to speak shows his perfect dominion over the spiritual region. All devils are weak in the presence of the Saviour. They are mighty and terrible to us, because of our many infirmities; but in the presence of the bold man who is clothed with perfect holiness, all devils are infinitely weak. The lesson is evident: we are mighty only as we are in Christ.

35. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

There is something very touchingly illustrative of our Saviour's humanity in this verse: he could have prayed upon his couch; none might have known how close was his intercourse with God as he continued in the house; yet as he worked after the sun was set, so he departed to pray before the sun had risen! If the Master required to pray, can the servants live without communion with God? The subject suggested by this verse may be called Morning Devotion. To begin the day with God is the only method of setting one's self above all its events, and triumphing over them

with perfect mastery. Our life will be poor if there be in it no solitary places where we pray. True life can never be developed among throngs and noises; we must betake ourselves into desert places; in a word, we must get away from men, and view life from such a distance as may be realised by intimate divine fellowship. As it is necessary for the artist to stand back from his work in order that he may see how it is shaping itself, so it is often necessary for us who are doing Christ's work to retire into solitary places that we may look at it from the altar of worship or perhaps from the valley of humiliation. How rapidly Christ lived! How he consumed himself in his ministry! This should be an appeal to Christians, calling them to enthusiasm and to vehemence in work. Jesus Christ did not remain in solitary places; he went to the sacred fountain that he might prepare himself to return to society, and do the work of the common day. A discourse might be founded upon these words, showing the religious uses of time. (1) Social service such as we have seen in the life of Christ. (2) Public ministry, in which crowds might enjoy our Christian teaching. (3) Sacred devotion, in which the soul will hold close intercourse with God.

These uses should not be separated one from the other; the teacher should show that all these uses really make up one true ministry. The incident may also be used to show the place of prayer in the earnest life. There is a sentimentalism which says work is prayer; so it is; and yet if we work without praying, our work will be powerless. Work is only prayer in so far as it is done in a prayerful spirit. He who works must pray, and he who truly prays must also work. In this verse the narrator uses a summary expression; he could only say that Jesus Christ prayed: what he says in his prayers, what entreaties he breathed on behalf of himself and his work, never can be known. There are also passages in our own life which can never be written; we ourselves have offered prayers which it is impossible to recall, so intense was their agony, so comprehensive their desire; yet, though unable to recall the intercession in detail, yet are strong in the memory that they were offered: the individual petitions have been forgotten, but the great exercise has strengthened, and the great answer nourished, the soul.

36. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.
37. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.
38. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for therefore came I forth.
39. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

The true disciple always knows where to find the Master: the disciples knew the habits of their Lord: they knew that in some hidden place he could be found in the early hours of the day; at all events they knew that Jesus Christ would be found in the path of usefulness or preparation for usefulness. Do men know where they can find us? Are our Christian habits so distinct and unchangeable that our friends can with certainty explain our position?

The picture in the 37th verse is most impressive; viz., the picture of all men seeking for Jesus. What the disciples say in their wondering delight shall one day be literally true—all men will be in search of the Saviour of the world. In the first instance the Saviour sought all men, and in the second all men will seek the Saviour. "We love him because he first loved us." Instant response to the desire of the world, as shown in Christ's readiness still further to preach the Gospel. His object in life was undivided, and its unity was its omnipotence. We are only strong in proportion to the concentration of our powers. Wherever we are we ought to be within the sphere of our ministry; and it ought to be an easy transition from one department of duty to another: Jesus Christ knew wherefore he had come forth, and it is incumbent upon us that we too should know our mission in life. No man can work mightily and constantly except in so far as he has a distinct and worthy object before him: the object must stir his whole nature, and move him by an importunate compulsion amounting in fact to inspiration. When a man begins to question the utility or practicability of his object in life, he enfeebles himself. There are many questionable objects which men set before themselves; and it is our delight as Christian observers to mark how they break down, and how those who were pursuing them abandon them with sorrow and disgust. We have to set before all men an object sufficiently simple to

engage the affections of the feeblest, and sufficiently sublime to absorb the energies of the strongest. Jesus Christ preached, and he called his servants to the same work. Preaching can never fail to be one of the mightiest instruments in stirring the human mind, and in moulding human society. Individual preachers may become feeble; even distinguished ministers may cool in the enthusiasm with which they undertook their great work; but preaching, as instituted by Jesus Christ, and exemplified in his own ministry, can never cease to be one of the most effective agencies in human education and progress. Preaching will be powerless except in proportion as it relates to Christ. We have a distinct Gospel to unfold; and if we are faithful to our calling, that Gospel will be found more than sufficient to supply our own want as preachers, and to meet all the necessities of the world. Jesus Christ preached and cast out devils, and we have to do the same thing. We may not meet the devil in the same form as that in which he presented himself during the personal ministry of Jesus Christ, but we have to meet him in all the subtlety, the insidiousness, and the terribleness of his unchanging and unchangeable nature. The preacher must make up his mind that there are still devils to be cast out; every man carries within him his own devil, some indeed carry legion. The only exorcist is the Saviour, and we are called to tell this fact, and to persuade men to avail themselves of his delivering power.

Under these verses might be shown the positive and the negative work of the Christian ministry; the positive work being to preach the Gospel, the negative to cast out devils. Great service would be done to humanity by fully developing the idea that all evil purposes and dispositions are to be associated distinctly with the name of the devil. We are to tell men, not merely that we seek to make them better by conducting them into the knowledge of new doctrines, but we are to take our stand before them as men who have come to deliver them from the personal power of the devil. There is hope of a man when he realises that he has actually been under Satanic dominion. So long as he looks upon his life as being blemished here and there, it is possible that he may have most inadequate ideas of the mission of Jesus Christ; but when he realises that he has actually been the habitation of the

very devil, he may be led to cry out for the deliverance which the Gospel has come to effect. The realisation on the part of the minister that he has to counteract and destroy the devil will stimulate him to use his utmost endeavours to make full proof of his ministry. He has not only to cope with wrong notions, but with a diabolic personality; and if this conviction thoroughly possess him, he will of necessity cultivate ever-deepening fellowship with Jesus Christ, who alone has the power to break up the kingdom of Satan.

40. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and said unto him, I will; be thou clean.

42. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

44. And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

45. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

In the 27th verse we found men putting questions regarding Jesus Christ's power; in the 40th verse we find a poor sufferer seeking to avail himself of Jesus Christ's curative energy. This marks the great difference between various classes of society in relation to the work of the Saviour. One class is content with looking, wondering, and perhaps admiring; another class may test his power in direct personal experience. Let it be distinctly pointed out that it is not sufficient to wonder at the ministry of Jesus Christ. In this chapter we have seen some who were brought to the Saviour; in the 40th verse we find a man who came to Jesus. Point out the blessedness of those who have others to conduct them to Jesus Christ; also point out the opportunity which each man has of making his own case known to Jesus Christ. This incident shows the trust which the ministry of the Saviour had inspired in the minds of sufferers, especially so in the case of the leper; the leper lived under the most terrible restrictions, yet his heart rose to the point of trust and love when he heard of the wonderful works of this new man. Others would have turned him away, or would have run eagerly beyond

his reach; but Jesus Christ, the undefiled and undefiling Man, touched him, and recovered him of his leprosy. Regarding this incident as illustrative of the method of spiritual salvation, it should be distinctly shown that the leper put himself unreservedly, without any suggestion or wishes of his own, into the hands of the Healer. He did not wish to be a party to the active work of healing himself; he was content to be passive, to wait his Lord's will. It should also be shown that Jesus Christ instantly gave practical expression to his own deep pity and mercy; he delights in immediately answering prayer. When we appeal to his justice, his righteousness, his sovereignty, we may be held a long time waiting, that we may know more fully what is meant by these high terms; but when we come in weakness and poverty, crying to his compassion, his heart instantly moves towards us. The humble desire of suffering soon moves the heart of Jesus Christ. The third point that may be dwelt upon is the completeness of Christ's cure: immediately the leprosy departed from the man, and he was cleansed. Is our Christian state one of complete pardon and hope? It is not asked whether it is one of complete sanctification, that is a progressive work; but the work of pardon will bring with it an instantaneous assurance that the burden of guilt has been removed. The impossibility of silence under the influence of great blessing is here most vividly illustrated. The joy of thankfulness cannot always be controlled. Christians must speak. The explanation of a true ministry is found in this incident. When we have received the highest blessings from the hands of Christ, we feel an insatiable desire to tell others of the great results of our having met the Saviour. The 45th verse shows how much can be done by the energy of one man. So much did the recovered leper publish his restoration, that Jesus Christ could no more openly enter into the city by reason of the multitude that thronged upon him, and by reason of the sensation which so great a miracle had created. Is there not in this incident an illustration of what we may do by being faithful to our convictions and impulses regarding the Son of God? Have we been healed without publishing the fact? Have we mentioned the fact of our conversion even to our dearest friend? Learn from the leper the possibility of so exciting a whole

neighbourhood about personal recovery as to extend the name and bring blessings upon the gracious power of Jesus Christ.

The 44th verse may be used for the purpose of showing how Jesus Christ brings men into the established laws and relations of his own government, even under circumstances which might seem to justify an exception to the usual course of things. In our highest moments of inspiration and delight we ought to be controlled by law. Even our ecstasy should be regulated where it might endanger the constancy and faithfulness of our life. Jesus Christ never dissociates the ministry from the preceding dispensations; he always heightens and consummates, he never destroys except by fulfilment, as the fruit destroys the blossom. The whole chapter might be used for the purpose of showing how possible it is for our Christian life to be sublime from the very beginning. This is the very first chapter in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, yet it is full of light; it might have been the last chapter, so crowded is it with incidents and good works. There are Christian people who are afraid of doing too much at the beginning; such people cannot have entered very deeply into the spirit of their Lord's enthusiasm and self-sacrifice. Youthful Christians should be encouraged to work from the very moment of the beginning of their new life. The earnest man does not care about the artistic graduation of his services, he does not even consider such a possibility; instantly that Jesus Christ takes possession of his heart his whole life becomes consecrated to the service of true doctrine and practical philanthropy. This chapter gives a most terrible rebuke to the notion that men should come only gradually into high Christian engagements; no renewed heart can too soon begin to do the good works and bear the blessed fruits of Christian regeneration. On the other hand, it should be pointed out for the encouragement of such as have few opportunities for the development of Christian vocation, that they will be judged not by the more public services which their brethren may render, but by the position in life which they have been called providentially to occupy.

Chapter ii.

CHRIST UNDER CRITICISM.

[An Analysis.]

1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days, and it was noised that he was in the house.

THE importance of having the names of towns and other places associated with religious services. Capernaum was thus associated with the name of Christ. Show what it is to have bad associations with places, how tormenting to the memory, and how enfeebling in the matter of enterprise.

2. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

The Gospel has a word to crowds as well as individual men. The Gospel is universal in its doctrines, and hence can be preached to all classes at all times and in all places. It is also particular in its application of truth, so that it can be addressed to any single human being. When Jesus Christ saw crowds, his business was to preach the word to them. Christians should endeavour to get Jesus Christ's view of crowds of men. To the Christian heart a crowd is a most exciting scene. The histories, the passions, the purposes, the designs of a great crowd, who can tell but God! Yet the Gospel is adapted to all.

3. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7. Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

8. And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9. Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy),

11. I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

(1) The helplessness of some men: all helplessness traceable to sin. (2) The social usefulness of other men; we can all carry sufferers to Christ, even when we cannot heal them ourselves. To point a sinner to Jesus Christ is a good work, to carry a little child to the Saviour is to execute a most blessed mission. (3) The possibilities of earnestness; these men uncovered the roof in their determination to approach the Healer. Some would have gone away, saying they would return on a more favourable occasion; some would have given up the endeavour altogether; these earnest men had an object in view, and were resolved on its accomplishment. All men can get to the Saviour if they so determine, however many be the apparent or real difficulties in their way. (4) The vigilance of Jesus Christ over human action. Notwithstanding the crowds, and his engagement in addressing them, Jesus Christ saw what was being done in this particular instance; he knew the meaning of the extraordinary movement that was taking place, and the reward which he gave to the earnest men was great. (5) The censorious spirits of technical observers. The scribes accused the Saviour of blasphemy; they could not understand his inspiration, and it is always a misfortune to be misunderstood. Whoever determines to live the highest life, determines also to expose himself to the heavy penalties of misinterpretation. Jesus Christ did not deny their inference regarding his claim to the Godhead; he did not instantly disclaim any pretence to be as God; on the contrary, he so asserted his power as to justify the astounding inference of the scribes. Particular notice should be taken of this as an incidental proof of

Jesus Christ's Godhead. To have allowed even tacitly the rightness of such inferences as were forced upon the scribes was, apart from his divinity, nothing short of a blasphemous assertion on his part. Jesus Christ works in much the same manner in relation to spiritual diseases. We can get no higher than himself; he is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, and he gives according to his sovereign will in response to human faith. The fulness of Jesus Christ's power is shown in the perfect ease with which he works his miracles. He speaks the recreating word, and yet there is within him no sign of exhaustion or insufficiency. Sinners should learn from this incident not to be discouraged because there are technical reasoners in their way, who are fertile in the suggestion of objections; those who bore the sick of the palsy on this occasion did not listen to the reasonings or the objections of those by whom they were surrounded. If any man in going to Jesus Christ can be detained in the way to listen to the criticisms and counsels of those who are opposed to Christ, the probability is that he will never reach the Saviour. It is true that in this instance the scribes were reasoning in their hearts, and not openly so that they could be heard by a crowd; it is also true in our own day that many reason aloud against the possibility of Jesus Christ's saving sinners; those therefore who are conscious of sin ought to be put on their guard against subtle and persistent objectors. Had the man been unconscious of a deep and distressing want, he and his friends might have listened to captious reasoning; but his necessity was so urgent that nothing less than a personal interview with Christ would satisfy him.

It is the same with the deadlier palsy of sin. If it be not to us the most terrible reality in our nature—if we do not so comprehend its horribleness as to loathe it unutterably—if we do not feel the moral agony which it inflicts until we cry out almost in despair—"What shall we do to be saved?"—it is almost certain that we shall be turned aside by frivolous critics. The first thing to be done is to feel bitterly and inexpressibly the infinite abomination of sin. No progress in our approach to Jesus Christ can be made until we have come into this experience of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. In proportion as a man's estimate of sin is low will he be indisposed to find Jesus Christ; when his sin fills his heart with sorrow and despair, he will be resolved to

surmount all obstacles that would interrupt his course toward the Saviour. The great result of the cure wrought upon the palsied man will be repeated on a broader scale in the consummation of Jesus Christ's ministry. It is said that "The people were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." So shall it be in the end of all things; there will be one universal ascription of glory to him who has redeemed the human race from sin, and given it eternal life. Here is contention at the beginning; men see things only in shadow and outline, whilst the process is going on they are victimised by their own impatience, and oftentimes interrupt the Saviour, and show their utter want of self-control; but when the whole work is finished, there will be throughout the universe a sense of thankful and glad amazement.

13. And he went forth again by the seaside; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

14. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphæus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

The Saviour was not content with an occasional great effort, as we are apt to be. He is now found teaching the multitudes. Here is an illustration of the twofold ministry of Jesus Christ, namely, doing good to the bodies and also to the minds of men. We are left to infer what is meant by this word taught. It is clear from the whole course of Jesus Christ that he regarded all men as requiring teaching; and it is also clear that he set himself forth as the Teacher who alone could reveal the highest truths of the universe. The Christian minister is to be emphatically a teacher; he can only teach truly and successfully as he repeats the lessons which he finds in the life of the Saviour. Teaching is more difficult than preaching. In teaching there must be inquiry into the special circumstances of the learners, and an encountering of the particular difficulties of those who come to be taught. The preacher has to a large extent to deal with general truths, he has to make bold universal proclamations; whereas the teacher may have to go into special adaptation of the divine truth to the distinctive circumstances of the individual case. The teacher requires to be not only thoroughly intelligent and intensely devoted to his work, but to be long-suffering in his

spirit and method of service. Men cannot be taught truth off-handedly; their prejudices must be studied, their capacities must be considered, and there must be such skilful balance in the offering of truth as shall meet different degrees of culture and sensibility.

In the 14th verse we turn once more to the individual case. In the 13th verse we have a multitude receiving instruction; in the 14th verse we have one man specially called. This is the way Christian ministers and teachers must work. We cannot all be like our Master, having equal facility in addressing crowds and persuading individual hearers. Some men have a gift of speaking so as to hold great multitudes under their dominion; others, again, have a most useful talent in speaking to the individual life and conscience. Levi was called from the receipt of custom; the great point is to consider, not what a man is called from, but what he is called to. We are all called from sin; we look not so much to that as to the infinite glory which is set before us as the outcome of Christian faith and love and service.

The same verse might be used as showing what can be done in the way of incidental work for Christ. We learn that Jesus Christ "passed by," as if this circumstance occurred quite casually, and not in the working out of a set purpose. It does not seem to have been part of the plan; yet undoubtedly it was so in the mind of Christ, to whom nothing could happen by chance. There is, however, a lesson to us, that we are to be always on the outlook for the good of men whom we are passing by in the various ways of life. Wherever we see a man we see an opportunity of speaking a word for Christ, and of calling men to a higher life. Courage and prudence are equally required in the discharge of these incidental services. There is a modesty that is immodest, and there is a forwardness which is but the courage of humility.

15. And it came to pass that as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

16. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

These verses show that Jesus Christ lived under a constant

fire of criticism. This was not unnatural. If we have escaped criticism it may be because we have escaped Christianity.

Criticism will always be provoked by an intensely Christian spirit. Men are apt to think that Jesus Christ took upon himself all criticism, and so relieved his followers from the remarks of those who are now opposed to them. This should be shown to be a deadly error. Those who criticised Jesus Christ were men of good outward standing; yet they were destitute of moral purity: such men are always most forward in giving opinions about the conduct of other people. Where there is a high moral character there will be prolonged forbearance of other people's weaknesses; but where the outward habit is in excess of the inward principle there will be no lack of censorious criticism.

In the case of Jesus Christ it is clearly shown that where there is moral purity there is noble independence of public opinion. Jesus went boldly into such houses as he elected as his temporary residences, he sat openly with publicans and sinners; and the reason of what in other men would have been defiant bravado was the intense and incorruptible purity of his own heart. Men can only brave public criticism surely and serenely in proportion as they are right. Righteousness is peace.

17. When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Jesus hears all the objections that are urged against him. He sees all the objections that are in the heart before they are formed into words. Of him it may be said, "Thou knowest my thoughts afar off." Jesus Christ does not look upon one opinion as secret and another as public; to him the whole story of human life is an open page, on which the noonday sun is shining. Jesus Christ has an instant answer to all objections: witness the case in point. From this answer we may see—(1) Duty of doing good avowedly—not going about it in an indirect manner as if we were making an experiment, but boldly and distinctly, approaching it with a set purpose of spending our best energy upon it. (2) We may see it to be our duty to go to those who are least cared for. We are only working in the line of the Saviour's mission as we begin at the very lowest point in the social scale. We cannot do fundamental and permanent good by

beginning at the top or in the middle; we must get down to springs and causes, we must begin at the very deepest point of human apostasy, and work our way steadily upward; there is a temptation even in Christian work to stop short of the lowest depth of human necessity. (3) Jesus Christ shows it to be our duty to associate with those whom we seek to save: he sat with them, he talked to them, he asked them questions, he made himself their personal friend, and so attained over them personal supremacy. This practice levels a deadly blow at the theory of doing good by proxy. It is comparatively easy to send other men on errands of mercy; but we are only working in Christ's spirit in so far as we are prepared to go ourselves, and openly identify our whole influence with the cause of fallen men. Where there is this intense personal consecration, there will, of course, be a disposition to engage as much co-operation as possible; our duty is to see that we do not find in co-operation an excuse for personal negligence. Jesus Christ answered his opponents almost invariably by laying down a great principle. He did not trust to uncommon reasonings, or work according to the special mood of the day. He had intense personal conviction, to which he constantly referred in explanation and defence of his ministry. Ministers are only strong up to the degree in which they know precisely what they have come to do; Jesus Christ said he came for the express purpose of healing the sick and calling sinners to repentance. Unity in this as in all other things is strength. When a man works with divided heart, his work ends in failure.

18. And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

19. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast.

20. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

21. No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

22. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

(1) There should be difference between Jesus Christ's disciples

and the disciples of all other men. It is noticeable how soon those differences were detected by the critics of the day. The differences should be as broadly marked now as they were in the days of Jesus Christ's visible ministry. (2) Those differences should find their explanation in Jesus Christ, not in the expression of the disciples themselves. Jesus Christ takes upon himself the responsibility of determining the public attitude of his disciples. They must be joyful or sad according to the spirit which he puts into them, or the temporary discipline to which he subjects them. There is a time when it is right for the disciples to be glad and triumphant, joyful as men who are at a wedding feast in the presence of the bridegroom; there is also a time in which they must bow down their heads in pensiveness and sad wonder about the future. The difficulty in many cases is for the heart to realise that, alike in joy and in sorrow, it may be working out the beneficent purposes of the Saviour. (3) The illustration about pieces of cloth and the different wines shows the perfect uniqueness of Christianity: there is to be no patching, there is to be no compromising. Christianity is to have a distinctiveness and speciality of its own; the ancient make and the modern variation are not to be put together as part and parcel of Christian truth; Christianity is to stand out alone complete in its indivisible and perfect unity. In this case again we see how Jesus Christ throws himself back upon great principles, and finds in the simplicity of nature and the integrity of truth the surest defence of his Church.

23. And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day, and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

24. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

25. And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him?

26. How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat, but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

27. And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

28. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Jesus is still living under the fire of criticism already referred to. In this particular interview it is made clear—(1) That all

critical inquiries are not to be condemned. This question on the part of the Pharisees was not at all unnatural. Men ought to be called upon to give explanations of habits that are opposed to the public sentiment and usages of their times. Jesus Christ does not resent the inquiry as if it proceeded from a wicked spirit. Let it be inferred from this that there are right questions to be put concerning the Christian religion and the practice of Christians. There are questions that are bad in their spirit and bad in their purpose; there are also questions which come quite naturally out of the extraordinary development of Christian conviction and impulse. Jesus Christ shows by his answers that he considered human life to be above all technical law. The disciples were an hungered as they passed through the corn fields. David was an hungered when he ate the shewbread; there are courses in human life when men are apparently or really lifted above the current of law and usage, and when life becomes to itself a determining law. (2) The perfect and inalienable supremacy of Jesus Christ is asserted in the last verse. He proclaims himself Lord over time, over institutions, and over human affairs. This great claim is not to be overlooked in estimating the dignity of Jesus Christ's personal ministry. Could any mere man have proclaimed his lordship over the Sabbath day? A man cannot be Lord of the Sabbath without being Lord of something beyond. God does not distribute these lordships; the Lord of the Sabbath is also the Lord of hosts.

PRAYER.

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon us! Our hands are withered, the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint: come to us in thy healing power, and make us young again. We would be born of water and of the Spirit; we would know in its effects the process of regeneration. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, for we can do none, but according to thy mercy must this washing of regeneration be effected. We know that thy purpose towards us is love; whatsoever the discipline may be, the end is our perfection; thou wilt have us in Christ Jesus, thou eternal Father, perfect, accepted, sanctified: may we, knowing the purpose and the end, even joyfully accept the process in all its painfulness. Thou dost not finish thy work to-day or to-morrow, but on the third day thou dost perfect thy purpose amongst men; then they see the topstone brought on, and hear the song of angels and the benediction of God; then hast thou rest and joy, and all thy people are filled with contentment. Jesus, never leave us, never withdraw from us even for one moment: only in thy presence are we safe; only under thy blessing can we grow in all holy progress; we are too weak to be left alone, the enemy is too strong for us, temptations are thick beyond all counting, and urgent with desperateness. Keep near us, abide with us, break bread to us in our hunger, and in the very manner of the breaking of the bread we shall see thee, and know thee to be the Lord. Help thy servants in the ministry to see thy will, to understand the meaning of thy kingdom, and to reveal what thou hast told them in all simplicity and sincerity, so that men may hear and fear, and turn unto the Lord in great multitudes. Help thy servants to bear all the difficulties, burdens, temptations of the ministry; and grant unto all thy Church in all its sections and departments a plentiful rain from heaven, that it may rejoice in the acknowledgment of thy blessing, in the recognition of thy love, and the bestowal of thine approval. Help us to read thy word aright, to receive it joyfully and gratefully, and to repeat it in consecrated and progressive lives. This our prayer we say at the Cross of Christ, the altar of the universe, the one way into heaven because the one way to pardon for guilty souls. At that Cross we tarry for God's great answer. Amen.

Chapter ii. 4.

"And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof."

UNUSUAL METHODS.

THE idea is that if you want to get at Christ you can do so. That is all. If you do not want to get at Christ you can easily escape by excuse. That is true. We all know it: we

have been partakers of that shameful trick. If you do not want to go to church you can find pleas enough for not going—lions in the way by the thousand: if you want to go the lions may be ten thousand in number, but you will be there. So we come back upon a homely but expressive proverb which says, "Where there's a will there's a way." We can do very much what we want to do. This is true in all things. See if the fault be not in the will. What a weak point is here; what a very fickle constitution is there; what an irrational sensitiveness puts in its plea at another point. How selfishness plays a subtle but decisive part in the tragedy or comedy of life! Whoever knew an earnest man permanently baffled? But how difficult to be earnest about religion! It is invisible, impalpable, imponderable; it is so largely distant, so truly spiritual; it cannot be weighed, measured, looked at; it does not come within the range of observation to any extent which appeals to a competitive selfishness. So men fail, and blame the devil; so men do not go to Christ, and say they were fated to keep away; thus men tell lies until they shut out the light of noonday by their shadow. The men in question could not get easily at Christ: but what is worth having that can be easily got at? When they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they tore off the roof, they broke it up. They meant to succeed, we do not; they did succeed, we fail; they ought to succeed, we ought to be defeated. Shame upon the economy of the universe if the coward ever won a battle, if the lazy man ever came back with a sheaf of corn! Do we really want to get at Christ? Our answer will contain everything that explains our success or our defeat. Is it the heart that wants to see the Saviour? or is it some adventure of the imagination that wants to catch his profile and then vanish, because it is a profile that ought to be seen? Is it the soul that says, "I will"? If so, the battle is half won; Christ himself comes into vision when he hears that poignant cry.

For what purpose do we want to see Christ? Everything will depend upon our reply to that inquiry. Christ himself will not come to some calls. Herod expected to see some great thing done by him, and Christ went into a cold stone, looked at Herod as a corpse might have looked at him, answered him not

—not by look, or touch, or word, or sign—until Herod was afraid. There is a silence more awe-inspiring than speech can ever be. For what purpose, therefore, do we want to see Christ? Is it upon real business? He answers nothing to curiosity; he cannot stop to chaffer with speculation; he will stay all night with an earnest Nicodemus; he will keep the sun from going down or rising up if the soul really wants him to settle questions of guilt and pardon. Are we prepared to take the roof away rather than not see Christ? In other words, are we prepared to take unusual methods, peculiar and eccentric ways, rather than be baffled in our quest after the Son of God? If these men had taken off the roof without first going to the door, Jesus Christ would have rebuked them. We must not be eccentric merely for the sake of eccentricity. There is a defiance of conventional propriety which is itself nothing but a base vulgarity that ought to be frowned down. But the men went to the door, they tried the regular way, and when they could not enter by the door, because the throng was so great, then they must make a door. Everything depends upon our treatment of circumstances. We must not defy conventional propriety merely for the sake of defying it; but when conventional propriety is closing up the door so that we cannot get in, we must find admission by the roof. Conventional propriety is killing the Church. Infidelity is doing the Church no harm at all. It does not lie within the power of a blatant scoffer to touch the Cross of Christ; but its protectors may not be faithful to their responsibility; the professors of Christ have it in their power to crucify him every day, and put him to an open shame.

Let us try to get at Christ, and first try to get in by the door. There are several doors, let us try the first. How crowded it is; how long-bearded the men are who are filling up the opening; and there is intelligence in their eyes, there is earnestness in every wrinkle of their venerable faces; these are men who have sat up all night over many a weary problem; they are not foolish men, they are men of culture, reading, thought, study; they are inquisitive men, they do not read the books of yesterday, they read the records that are a thousand years old. But we cannot pass them, because we have not learned their letters. These are

the rabbis of the Church, and unless we can take their language and swing with them over ten centuries, we cannot be allowed to pass that way. Then let us try some other door. Here are other men not wholly dissimilar; they, too, have marks of study upon their faces; these eyes have been tried by many a midnight lamp; but they talk long words, and hard words; we never heard our mother use such language; every word is a word of many syllables that requires a kind of verbal surgeon to take it to pieces. Hear how they talk; though the words be very long, yet they speak them glibly, with a fluency that itself is a mockery, because we feel that we could not even stumble our way across such stony paths. Who are they? They are the philosophers. We cannot get in there; let us try another door. Here are men looking one another in the face, and reasoning in high argument, and proving and then disproving, reaching conclusions only to shatter them; we shall make nothing out at that door. Who are these men, who have weights and scales and measures, and who will not admit anything that does not prove certainties? They are the logicians, the controversialists, the men of open throat, and eye of fire, and tongue like a stormy wind; they will argue. What does it all come to? To blocking the way, to shutting up the door. You and I, poor broken hearts, cannot find access there. Shall we go home?

We came to see Christ, and we mean to remain until we do see him. Then let us try another door. Who are these men robed and certified, and who bear the image and aspect of officers? They are skilled hands here. Evidently they keep no end of keys; mayhap they may have the key we want. They are burning incense, opening doors, ringing bells, performing ceremonies, almost dancing in their strange gesticulations. Who are they? Ceremonialists. You never caught one of them ten minutes late in the morning. They live by ceremony; they like it, it suits them wholly. Who are they? They are ecclesiastics; men who have tailors to themselves. "Clerical tailors" is a word you now see in brass letters on certain audacious windows. We cannot get in there. Shall we go home? No. We came out to find the Son of God, and we will find him. Saviour, Son of David, have mercy upon us! What shall

we do? We must resort to unusual ways. They will not allow us to go to church, then let us meet on the seashore; they will not admit us without certain cards and certificates and endorsements: ruin be to all their mechanism! Let us, brother, fall down here on bare knees at an altar consecrated by the incarnation of the Son of God; mayhap he will see us without the piece of official paper; he may hear heart-prayer when we cannot have access to written form, couched in noble language, if anything too dignified for heaven.

Do you want to see Christ? There are men who say they would go in but they cannot find their way through the rabbis, or through the philosophers, or through the logicians, or through the ecclesiastics, and there they are. Shame on them! they are not earnest; they would not allow a friend to escape in that way. They do not want Christ. Nicodemus found a way. It was a long weary day that. He looked often at the clouds and at the sun, to see if he could steal forth. He was determined not to rest until he had spoken to this wondrous man. He waited for the night, and the night like a veiled friend came and took him to the Saviour, and they sat up all night; and that night the heaven trembled with stars, there was hardly room in all the firmament for the stars that wanted to glitter out their infinite secret upon the heart of this inquiring master in Israel; never did a night so starry bend over the earth. To have been there! Zacchæus found a way. He said, I am short, I cannot reach over the shoulders of these men, but I will climb up yonder sycamore tree. He never would have been chief among the publicans, and rich, if he had been afraid of climbing a tree; that explains the man's success in life. To have seen him otherwise you would have just seen a dapper little gentleman that never seemed to have touched anything with his fine fingers; but when he wanted to carry an object, then see how the dapper little gentleman changed into a fiery little furnace that meant to win, and up the tree he went, for Christ was to pass that way. Some men would never have seen the tree; some men certainly would not have climbed the sycamore; others would have said, "Perhaps on another occasion we may see him." But to earnestness there is no "other occasion"; there is only one day, and that is to-day.

There be indolent, leisurely, contemplative souls who play with time; they speak of "to-morrow" as if it were theirs; they speak of "another occasion" as if they had compromised with death, and staved the monster off for a settled series of years. Zacchæus has only one time, one opportunity; he lives in a burning now. There was a woman who found a way. They need not have called her a woman; she could not have concealed that fact; they might have told us the incident, and we should have fixed the sex. She said, If I might but touch the hem of his garment; if these poor fingers could but touch the craspedon, I shall be healed. She did it quietly, silently, but Jesus knew that she did it, for he said, "Who hath touched me?" and the vulgar disciples said, "Touched thee! Why, see how they throng thee, and sayest thou who touched thee? Why, we are all touching thee." "No," said Christ, "no; some finger has taken life out of me; whose finger was it? I am conscious that virtue has gone out of me." There is a rude touch that gets nothing; there is a sensitive touch that extracts lightning from God, virtue from the Cross. There is a hearing that gets nothing, because the hearer simply hears the noise, the succession of syllables, words, paragraphs; there is another hearing that catches a sound within the sound, music within the articulation; there is a hearing that only wants one word, it can supply all the rest; give it that one word, and see how it runs to tell its exultant joy. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear; he that hath fingers to touch, let him touch; he that hath eyes to see the invisible, let him look, and all heaven shall be full of angels. Do we want to see Christ? That is the urgent, recurrent, tremendous question.

There is a permissive violence—"They uncovered the roof . . and when they had broken it up——" There are respectable persons who lock up their churches six days out of seven, lest by some accident some poor blunderer should scratch the paint. They say they are careful of the church. So they are, much too careful. But the church was made for man, not man for the church; the roof was made for man, not man for the roof. Were they going to let fifteen feet of canvas stand between them and the living Healer of the universe? Were they going

to balance a dying man against a roof that a hand could tear off? They must be at Christ. There is an acceptable violence. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." That is his constant reply to earnestness. It is not stated that he had any conversation with the man. Some of us are blessed on the road to church; it cost us a great deal to get to church that day, and Jesus joined us on the road and gave us Sabbath before we got inside, so that when we came within the gates of the sanctuary the whole place glowed like a chamber let down from heaven. Jesus knows what it cost some people to get at him; he knows that they have to give up old acquaintances, bad ways of business, habits that had laid themselves with iron grip upon the heart, and before they have time to speak, he says, I know it all; thou shalt have the fatted calf, a ring for thy hand, and shoes for thy feet, and this shall be thy father's house; as for thy sins, they are in the sea, they have gathered themselves together and plunged into the deep. Son, stand up! There is a church-going that amounts to battle and victory in one supreme act. Unusual ways are permitted under certain circumstances; when there is real need they are permitted; where there is no alternative they are allowed.

This is where the Church has got wrong. It has its little methods, and its small plans, and its neat ways of doing things, and the devil never was afraid of neatness. That is an awful blemish anywhere. A "neat" sermon! Could you degrade that loftiest, noblest, grandest speech more than by calling it a neat sermon? We must get rid of a good many people in order to get at reality in all this matter of adaptation to the necessities of the case. We must part with all the cold hearts; they have occupied so much space in the church in what are called for some inscrutable reason "pews," and therefore we shall miss them, because they did weigh and measure so much arithmetically; but they are better gone! Personally I would turn every church to its most multifarious uses, if I could do good in that way which is impossible in any other way. Unusual ways have always been permitted. Once there was a man who was very hungry, and there was nothing to eat but the shewbread, the holy bread, and he took it ravenously and devoured it, and God

said, "That is right." Hunger has a right to bread. No man should be punished for taking bread when after honest endeavour and strenuous service he has failed to get it otherwise. He is no thief who, being honest in his soul, has failed to get bread and is dying of hunger, and that openly says, "This is for man, and I solemnly, religiously take it." God never condemned such an action. I know how dangerous it is even to hint at this, because there be some mischievous minds that do not turn water into wine, but wine into water, and water into poison; there is a process of deterioration; if any such man should pervert my words so the blame be his, not mine. Once it was impossible to eat the passover in the regular way; circumstances so combined that a good deal of the prescribed mechanism had to be done away with; and we read in the historical books that they ate the passover, "otherwise than as it was written." Everything goes down under the agony of human need. Once there was a number of persons who assailed the Son of God because he healed a man on the Sabbath day; and he said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." If we do not find Christ, blame ourselves. Never does Christ blame himself because the people have not found him. That is a remarkable circumstance; consider it well; in no instance does Jesus Christ say, "These people might have been saved if I had shown myself to them. But I kept out of the way purposely, therefore they are not saved." He declares the contrary to be the fact; he says; "I would, but ye would not; ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" He never says, "He would not." He lived to die; he died to live; he ascended to intercede.

It is never easy to get at Christ; it ought not to be easy to get at him. It means battle, pressure, determination. "Strait is the gate, narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The road is over a place called Calvary, and a voice says to those who attempt that way, "Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me, he cannot be

my disciple." To one man Jesus said, "Sell all that thou hast, and come"; to another he said, "Except a man hate his father and his mother [in comparison] he cannot be my disciple"; another who thought he was going on to riches and honour said he would go, and Jesus said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." But the battle has a great victory. Small efforts end in small consequences. Again, therefore, the question recurs, Do we want to see Christ? Is it our heart that wants him, or our curiosity? Are we only asking the question of imagination, or are we propounding the inquiry of agony? To-day I set open the door of the kingdom of heaven in the name of Jesus. To weary men I would represent him saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst"—Lord, we all thirst; our hearts thirst, our souls have drunk rivers of water and still they thirst—"if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." May we all go? "He, every one that thirsteth, come!" Who says so? The Spirit, the bride, and the Giver of the water, the First, and the Last. It is an awful thing to have heard this discourse. It puts us into a new relation. Cursed be the tempter that led me into this church! some soul may say, for without being here I should have bewildered myself and perplexed myself and excused myself; but this man has torn the roof off the house of my excuses, and laid my bad man's pleas open to the sun of heaven. Others may say, Blessed be God for this word, for we have heard to-day that if any man really desires to see the Son of God, him the Son of God will see.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, teach us that all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole world; there is nothing hidden from the sight thereof. Help each of us to say, Thou God seest me. In this fear and in this hope may we live every day. We thank thee for the Son of God, who reads our hearts, who knows our inward and unspoken reasoning, and who will judge us accordingly. Behold, we stand before him to be judged; but do we not first stand before his Cross to be saved? May we not there plead with God, each saying for himself, God be merciful unto me a sinner? Then we shall not fear the judgment-seat, for there shall we meet our Saviour, and he will know the power and grace of his own priesthood. We would therefore live in Jesus: we would be crucified with Christ, that we may rise with the Son of God: we would know the fellowship of his sufferings, that we might afterwards know the power of his resurrection. Help us to be true in soul, pure in heart; then shall our lives be open, fearless, useful. Holy Spirit, hear us when we humbly say, Dwell with us: continue thy ministry of light and purification in our mind and heart until the sacred process is complete. For all we know of light, for all we care for things divine and eternal, we bless and magnify the grace of God. Once we were blind, now we see; we have returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls: may we go out no more for ever. May we abide in the tabernacle of the Most High, and be sheltered evermore under the wings of the Almighty; may our spirits grow in holy anger against all things wrong and mean, false and selfish. Because thou knowest us altogether we will come to thee with fearless childlike trust. Lord, undertake for us; show us the right way; may we give no heed to our own vain imaginings, but look into the law and to the testimony of wisdom and progress, and abide in the same, diligently obeying the will of our Father in heaven. Pity us wherein we have been wrong, and done wrong in instances countless, each aggravating the other. The Lord shows us that where sin abounds grace doth much more abound; that the Cross of Christ erects itself in welcoming love above all the tumult and uproar of human sin. Keep us until the end, until the day of doom; then, life's little journey done, may we stand, through the power of the everlasting Cross, among those who are arrayed in white garments, never more to be spotted by the world. Amen.

Chapter ii. 8.

"Why reason ye these things in your hearts?"

UNSPOKEN OBJECTIONS TO CHRIST.

THEN there is an unspoken life. Then silence may be eloquence. This is mysterious, and this is alarming. Here are words found for our silence. We thought our silence was sacred; we said, Our words being spoken belong to us exclusively no more, they are common property, but our silence is our own; that never can become public property; we can have a heart-life quite solitary, and of that life we may be absolute monopolists. All this is broken in upon suddenly and ruthlessly by this new voice. There is now no secrecy; privacy is a term of very limited application. The new voice is very explicit; it says, Whatsoever is spoken in secret shall be proclaimed from the housetop. That which was supposed to have been done under the cover of darkness shall stand forth in the blaze of noonday. It will be well to take this fact into consideration in studying man's history and action. By neglecting this fact, who can tell how much we lose of intellectual reality and spiritual beneficence? By omitting this fact as an element of reality in the government of mind we may soon come to live a fool's poor life. We should be greater men, built on another scale, sustaining new and higher relations, if we realised the fact that there is nothing in our minds or hearts that is not perfectly and absolutely known. It will be difficult for some men to believe this; but it is difficult for some men to believe anything. The difficulty may arise from want of mental capacity and spiritual sensitiveness, or that general faculty which lays hold of things subtle and impalpable. Did you hear the tinkling of that bell? No. I did; that is the difference between you and me. Did you hear that footstep? I did not, but you did; I should have said there was no footstep, but you heard it. Ignorance must not stand in the way of wisdom; speculation about probability and improbability must not stand in the way of realised fact. Here is a piece of soft pensive music; listen: did you ever hear anything quite so exquisite? You say you cannot hear; why can you not hear? Because of the infirmity

of deafness. Then is your deafness to be the measure of other people's sensitiveness of hearing, or is the sensitiveness of other people only to show you more clearly the reality and the pitiableness of your infirmity? Christian believers say—and you must ruin their character before you can destroy their evidence—that they see the unseen, endure as seeing the invisible, fasten their eyes upon things not seen and eternal, realise the nearness of spiritual intelligences and ministries; and you want us in an age of advanced learning and culture to set up ignorance against wisdom, and to oppose insensateness to that sensitivity which hears the footfall of God in the wind. That cannot be done. We are anxious to accommodate every capacity and degree, but we cannot allow boundless ignorance to urge its immensity as an argument for its acceptance.

Every man, then, is really two men. He is, first, viewing him from an external point, a speaker; then he is a thinker. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he. Not a word you have said is worthy of a moment's attention if it has not expressed the reality of your heart. The smile upon your face is a lie if it express not a finer smile on the heart. Here we are a perplexity and a mystery to ourselves. Sometimes we hardly know whether we are on the one side or on the other; so subtle is the whole action of life that there are points in consciousness when it is almost impossible to say whether we are leaning towards the reality or the semblance. There are other times when we want to speak out everything that is in the heart and mind. We are checked by fear. We are disabled for want of language; a hundred considerations instantaneously flash themselves upon the judgment, and want to be umpire over the conflicting processes of our own mind. We carry things in the soul by majority. One man is not one vote in any case of real intellectual and spiritual excitement; nor is one mind one decision regarding many practical outgoings, reasons, and responsibilities of life. In your own soul, the silent parliament of the spirit, you carry things by majorities. You say, On the whole this is better than that; taking a large view of the case, there are seven reasons why I should do it, and I can only discover four why I should not do it; I will obey the indication of the larger number. But whilst

we are willing to grant that there are spheres and sections of life in which it is almost impossible to tell whether it is the thinker or the speaker that is about to act; yet there is difference enough amongst the sections of life to excite our spiritual jealousy, lest we should be telling lies to ourselves in the very act of speaking them so loudly as to delude the conscience into a belief in our sincerity. We have employed emphasis to cheat the conscience. Here is the mystery of man: what he thinks is one thing, what he says is another. Christ wants to bring these two hemispheres of mental action into unity, harmony, and identical expressiveness. He would make us so clean of heart that we cannot be foul of lip; he would so exalt the soul in love of truth that it could not speak a lie. Any religion that proposes to work this miracle is a true religion, wherever its Author came from; and its Author has a right to be heard by the moral grandeur of his purpose.

What is Christ's relation to this mysterious dual relation of man? It is a relation of perfect knowledge. The scribes and others round about him were reasoning, saying, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only, and immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit . . . ." "He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man." How could he do otherwise? He made man, he redeemed man; he sends forth the Paraclete to sanctify man. He knows us therefore creatively, experimentally, sympathetically, and by every process that can possibly be applied to the knowledge of human nature. He hears our heart beat; he knows how the pulse stands; he writes down in his book the history of the day—not the history of the deceptive, often self-deceiving, hand, but the history of the heart, the soul, the mind, the spirit, which is the real man. The hand is but the glove of the soul. We must penetrate to inward realities before we can know how much Christ knows. He searches us through and through. This is the prerogative of God: he searches the heart and he tries the reins of the children of men. He knows our thought afar off. We speak of plasm, of things remote, small, microscopical, growing, accumulating upon themselves, ever rising in capacity and expressiveness of life; in talking

so we talk according to fact. It is said therefore of God that he knows our thought before it is a thought; he knows the plasm of it, he knows it in its first, its earliest, its invisible conception. Before we know it he knows; before we dare find words for our thought he has written that thought fully down in heaven. Unless we stand in this consciousness—let me recur to an early point—we shall live a fool's life, quite lineal, superficial, without cubic measurement, depth, value, worth. And are we to live such a life when we can escape it? Are we to live externally when we can live metaphysically, internally, spiritually? Are we to be content with things on the surface when we may penetrate and bring up things from the very depths of the wisdom and grace of God? To this higher life we are called, and God the Holy Ghost is pledged to accomplish our education in this development if we will yield ourselves to his gracious ministry.

Christ sustains a position of fearlessness in regard to the whole internal economy of the human mind and human life generally and particularly. He need not have challenged these men. A false teacher would not have challenged them; he would have said, If they raise no objection I shall suggest none; they look very troubled and doubtful, but I shall not trouble them to express their trouble or their doubt; it is not for me to encourage men to express scepticism or unbelief; I will therefore close this subject, and swiftly turn to another. That is not Christ. Christ said, "Why?"—let us have nothing hidden about these mysteries; speak out your objection, give it word that we may consider it openly, and for the advantage of yourselves and others. This fearlessness of the Son of God is no small consideration in estimating the quality of his character. He will have nothing hidden away in the heart that can be brought out of it, and used helpfully in the Christian education of the soul. Preachers are sometimes blamed for raising doubts; whereas in reality they are only answering them. Let us beware of a self-considering and cowardly ministry that says in effect, If the people do not know these things I shall not tell them; if they do not express the doubts I will not answer them; in fact, I may flatter myself with the observation that perhaps I may raise more doubts than

I can settle. I may suggest more questions than I can answer; I think, therefore, I will live on the sunny side of my work, and do as little as possible towards encountering the unspoken tumult and conflict of the human soul. It is perfectly true that we may raise more doubts than we can settle, we may ask more questions than we can answer; at the same time every ministry ought to address itself to the realest part of the life. Do not address mere fancy or taste or sentiment, but get at the unspoken heart-thought. The people are quite content in numberless cases that we should address their fancy: How lovely, how bird-like some of the notes of the voice; how fascinating and enchanting altogether in manner! Some are perfectly content that we should address their taste; they say, How polished, how quiet, how very beautiful, how classic; how vividly the speaker recalled the best of days of Attic eloquence! Away with this intolerable and indescribable rubbish! We meet in the house of God to talk reality, to get at life in its inmost thought, to address not the decoration of the face, but the disease of the heart. The Lord send us, if need be, rough prophets, Elijahs and John the Baptists, who will speak out thunderously and boldly, and sweep away from the debased pulpit all attempts to please mere sentiment, and gratify pedantic and therefore perverted taste. When we are revealed to ourselves it may be found that we are altogether inverted, and that we have been making a false impression upon society, if not actually upon ourselves. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, and therefore it is perfectly possible for a man to be imposed upon by himself,—to be, in other words, his own impostor. He wants to look well in his own eyes, and he is willing to overlook a little here and overlook a little there, and may promise himself concessions of divers kinds; upon the whole he will recommend himself to himself. Let us not fear the scathing, searching process, the cruel analysis of Christ. Then the matter may stand thus: For such and such reasons I proceeded in this course. Then the Lord will say, You call them reasons; now let me show you that they are all excuses. You defrauded your own soul by talking euphemistically, by speaking of reasons as if they were points wrought out by logic and fact and a right connection of events properly interpreted; whereas in reality they are all excuses, vain pleas, selfish argu-

ments; you wanted to reach such and such a conclusion, and you laid the stepping-stones accordingly.

There is all the difference in the world between light and darkness, between reasons and excuses. We have degraded our life by processes of self-excusing. We would not go out because —then we told a lie in measured language to ourselves. We would have gone out ten times that night if we could have made a thousand pounds; and we know it, and we shall have to face that challenge some day. We were afraid; whereas the fear was a selfish fear and a miserable cravenness, and ought to have been eradicated and blown away as if by contemptuous winds. And thus would the process go on: namely, I endeavoured to be amiable and gentle, and to put a good appearance upon things. And the Lord will say, Amiability is your word—insincerity is mine; it was not light that was on your face, but sheen, glamour, a calculated and manufactured thing. Amiability you call it—hypocrisy I name it; you ought not to have been amiable; you ought to have been stern, resolute, unbending, judicial; you ought to have insisted on right being acknowledged, even if right was not done. And thus will the process advance, namely: I was tolerant of men's weaknesses, I was charitable in relation to their prejudices and their actions; I endeavoured to take a large and tolerant view. Christ will say, Thou wicked servant! it was not toleration, it was self-defence; you allowed a man to do something wrong that you might do something still more deeply evil; you tolerated vice in others that you might practise it yourself; you call that toleration—it was not toleration, it was false judgment, bad character, rottenness of heart and soul. Why did you not speak to yourselves words of fire? Why did you not criticise yourselves with the judgment of God? If you had then spoken out boldly, fearlessly, the very action of so speaking might have lifted you into a higher spiritual manhood, and then you would have displayed a true courage. Do not talk of reasons when they are excuses; do not speak of amiability when it is insincerity; do not set up toleration as a plea for self-indulgence: be true in your hearts that you may be true in your speech.

We are entitled to believe that there is no objection which Christ cannot answer. Personally, I never heard a single objection against Christ that could not be completely answered and satisfied. Let us beware lest we call objections what ought to be called quibbles. The quibbler will do nothing for you in the extremity of your life. He is a very clever wordmonger; he has a great skill in verbal legerdemain; he can twist the words wondrously, he can play with them like so many balls thrown up in the air, and kept there in rhythmic movement; but if he be only a quibbler he will do nothing for you when the rain falls and the wind blows and the earth shakes under your feet. Quibbling cannot cover all the need of life. Let it have its half-day's sunshine and holiday; let it practise its little gambols on some little greensward, but let it know that beyond that it cannot go. When night darkens and the storm roars and the foundations of things are out of course, and death—pale, grim, cruel death—comes for his dole and tax, the quibbler will not be within earshot in that dark time. If you have objections to Christ, state them, state them in the plainest, simplest, directest terms; and distinguish between an objection and a quibble, and especially distinguish between a reason and an excuse, and still further distinguish between a solid objection to Christianity and a secret love of sin that would get rid of the Cross, that it might get rid of self-accusation. Thus, thou Son of God, thou dost call us to reality, faithfulness, candour. A voice so calling is like a great and mighty wind from heaven. It is not earth-wind, full of dust; it is heaven's gentle tempest, charged with love.

Chapter iii.

HEALING THE WITHERED HAND.

[An Analysis.]

1. And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

2. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day: that they might accuse him.

3. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

4. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

5. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored whole as the other.

(1) CHRIST'S detection of human incompleteness. He instantly discovered that there was a man in the synagogue with a withered hand. The musician instantly detects a false note; the painter instantly detects an inartistic line; the complete Christ instantly detects the incomplete man. (2) Jesus Christ's power over partial disease. The man had only a withered hand. In some cases Christ had to heal thoroughly diseased men, in this case the disease was local; yet in both instances his power was the same. (3) Christ's inability to heal the obstinacy of his enemies. Here we come into the moral region, where all power is limited, and where omnipotence itself can work effectually only by the consent of the human will. A series of contrasts may be drawn in connection with this point. Christ could raise dead bodies; but dead souls had first to be willing to be raised. Christ could quell the storm on the sea, but he could not quiet the tumult of rebellious hearts. (4) Christ's moral indignation overcoming all outward obstacles. He was indignant with the men who valued the sacredness

of a day above the sacredness of a human life. Herein he showed the intense benevolence of his mission. Everything was to give way to the importunity of the wants of men. An important point is involved in the question which Jesus Christ puts in the fourth verse, viz., not to do good is actually to do evil.

The instance shows Christ's carefulness over individual life. There was only one man, yet Jesus Christ gave that solitary sufferer the full benefit of his omnipotence. The Gospel is a revelation of God's love to individual men.

There are special moral deformities as well as special bodily diseases. Some Christians have withered hands, or defective vision, or one-sided sympathies, imperfect tempers, or faulty habits. Christ alone can heal such diseases.

All kinds of sufferers ought to associate the synagogue, the sanctuary, with their best hopes. It should be a place of healing, and of instruction, and of all holy stimulus.

6. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

This verse shows the working of three determined and most mischievous powers: (1) The power of prejudice; (2) The power of technicality; (3) The power of ignorance. Prejudice as against Christ; technicality as opposed to humanity; ignorance as forgetful of the fact that in morals as well as in physics the greater includes the less. Sabbath-keeping is less than man-healing.

7. But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea; and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judæa,

8. And from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

(1) There is a time to withdraw from opponents. (2) Withdrawment is not necessarily the result of cowardice. (3) Withdrawment from one sphere ought to be followed by entrance into another.

Great things draw great multitudes. How did Christ exercise his influence over great throngs? (1) He never lowered the moral tone of his teaching; (2) He was never unequal to the increasing demands made upon his power; (3) He never requested the multitude to help him in any selfish endeavours.

No subject can draw such great multitudes as the Gospel. No subject can so deeply affect great multitudes as the Gospel. No subject can so profoundly and lastingly bless great multitudes as the Gospel.

9. And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

10. For he had healed many: insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

11. And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

12. And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

(1) Whoever has power to satisfy human necessities will never be in want of applicants. This is most obvious in the case of bodily suffering, but the principle holds good in reference to the deepest wants of human nature. (2) Unclean spirits may pay compliments to the good without changing their own disposition. (3) Unclean spirits are always commanded, as in this case, not to attempt the revelation of Christ. In the instance before us there was of course a special reason for the injunction; but the principle is applicable to the whole subject of teaching and interpreting Christ and his doctrine.

13. And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.

14. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

15. And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.

16. And Simon he surnamed Peter;

17. And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

18. And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Canaanite,

19. And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.

20. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

This paragraph may be used as showing the beginnings of the Christian Ministry. (1) The Christian ministry is an organization; (2) the Christian ministry is divinely selected; (*a*) a warning to pretenders; (*b*) an encouragement to true servants; (*c*) a guarantee of adaptation and success. (3) The Christian

ministry is invested with special powers. The work of the ministry is to heal and bless mankind. This work can be fully sustained only by close communion with him who gave the power. Jesus Christ does not give even to ministers power for more than the immediate occasion. They must renew their appeals day by day. To them as to all the Church applies the admonition—"Pray without ceasing."

Amongst the general remarks which may be made upon the subject are the following: (1) Some ministers are marked by special characteristics, as, for example, Peter and James and John. (2) Some ministers are more prominent than others. One or two of the names in this list are prominent and illustrious; others are comparatively obscure. (3) The principal fact to determine is not a question of fame, but a question of vocation; whom Christ has called to the ministry he will also award appropriate honour.

On the 19th verse, remark (1) the possibility of debasing a divine position; (2) the impossibility of detaching the stigma of unfaithfulness. The name of Judas will always be associated with the betrayal, and the name of Simon Peter will always bring to memory his denial of his Lord.

21. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

The abuses of friendship. (1) Friendship unable to follow the highest moods of the soul. (2) Friendship unable to see the spiritual meaning of outward circumstances. (3) Friendship seeking to interfere with spiritual usefulness. (4) Friendship seeking to reduce life to commonplace order. The sincere servant of Jesus Christ will take his law from the Master, and not from public opinion. The most complete detachment from worldly considerations and pursuits is necessary to sustain the soul when friendship itself becomes an assailant. The misinterpretation of our conduct by friendly critics often occasions the severest pain which is inflicted upon our spiritual life. The hand of enmity may be concealed within the glove of friendship.

22. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem, said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

23. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

24. And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand

25. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.
26. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

Christ now encounters open hostility in addition to friendly, though mischievous, remonstrance. A theory of explanation was proposed by the scribes. Christ's answer to that theory shows (1) that opinions of leading minds may be entirely fallacious; and (2) that common-sense often suggests the best answer to fanciful theories respecting the work of Christ. Christ's whole answer turned upon the common-sense of his position. He does not plead authority; nor does he plead exemption from the ordinary laws of thought and service; he simply puts in the plea of common-sense. This fact supplies the basis for a discourse upon the relations of common-sense to the Gospel. The Gospel may in this respect be likened to Jacob's ladder, the foot of which was upon the earth. The Gospel has its peculiar mysteries, and its light too brilliant for the naked eye; at the same time it has aspects and bearings admitting of the most vivid illustration and defence within the region accessible to all minds. On the other hand the paragraph shows (1) the binding power of religious prejudice; and (2) the utter recklessness of religious bigotry. With regard to the suggestion of the scribes it should be remembered (1) that bold theories are not necessarily true; and (2) that the espousal of untrue theories will end in the confusion and humiliation of the theorists.

27. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

Human life as affected by two different forces. (1) The strong enemy; (2) the strong friend. It is important to recognise the strength of the enemy, because it may be supposed that little or no effort is required to encounter his assaults. It should always be pointed out that Jesus Christ never speaks with hesitation as to the results of his repulse of the enemy. He never represents himself as clothed with more than sufficiency of power. In the text he is set forth as spoiling the strong man. It was prophesied that he should bruise the serpent's head.

Application: (1) Man must be under one or other of these forces,—the enemy or the friend. (2) Those who continue under the devil will share the ruin to which he is doomed. When Satan's head is bruised, all who are in his empire will be crushed.

28. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:

29. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

30. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Tischendorf reads the twenty-ninth verse "in danger of the eternal sin." Two aspects of human probation: (1) the pardonable, (2) the unpardonable. (1) The pardonable. (*a*) Its great extent, "all sins," etc.; (*b*) the implied greatness of the divine mercy. (2) The unpardonable: (*a*) its intense spirituality; (*b*) its perfect reasonableness. To sin against the Spirit is to cut away the only foundation on which the sinner can stand. Christianity is the appeal of God's Spirit to man's spirit; men may sin against the letter, the form, the dogma, and yet be within the pale of forgiveness; but when they revile and defy the very Spirit of God, they cut themselves off from the current of divine communion.

31. There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

32. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

33. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?

34. And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren.

35. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

(1) The spirituality of Christ's relationships. The kinship of the body is held subordinate to the kinship of the spirit. (2) The true bond of communion with Christ: (*a*) not merely natural; (*b*) not merely social. What is the true bond of communion with Christ? Obedience to God's will. (*a*) There is but one infallible will; (*b*) that will appeals for universal obedience,—"whosoever." (3) The privileges resulting from communion with Christ. (*a*) Intimate relationship,—mother, sister, brother; (*b*) social communion: this is the family idea.

Among the general inferences which may be drawn from this passage are the following: (1) If men are to obey the Divine will, a great change must pass upon their natural dispositions. (2) If our communion with Christ is spiritual, it will be eternal. (3) If all the good are Christ's kindred, they are the kindred of one another, and ought therefore to live in the spirit of brotherhood.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, do thou take away the heart of unbelief, and put within us a believing spirit. Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief. Thou canst do all things with him who believeth; all things are possible to him: but is not faith the gift of God? Lord, increase our faith. Thou knowest how we are beset by the senses, how we are limited and tempted and urged by a thousand influences which only thine own strength can resist: come to our aid, stand by our side. Christ, thou Son of God, thou wast in all points tempted like as we are; thou knowest our frame, thou rememberest that we are dust, and thou wilt not suffer us to be tempted with any temptation that cannot be overcome. Our hope is in God; our confidence is in the Cross; we fly unto the Son of God as unto an eternal refuge. Save us, keep us, protect us, in all the hours of agony which make our life so deep a trouble. Thou knowest us altogether: the difficulties here and there, in the house, in the church, in the market, in the soul itself—that inner battlefield on which the great contests are urged and waged and finished. Lord, again and again we say, Come from thy Cross and save us; Christ, Thou Son of man, have mercy on us! Lead us into the knowledge of thy truth; give us such a love of thyself and thy purpose that all other influences and impulses shall be shut out from our life, or sanctified and regulated by thy presence. Thou knowest our downsitting and our uprising, our going out and our coming in; there is not a word upon our tongue, there is not a thought in our heart, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. This is our joy, and this is our terror; for wherein we would be right how blessed is thy smile; and wherein we would seek to deceive thee or evade thee, how awful is the penetration of thine eye. Regard us in all the relations of life, and make us strong in Christ and in his grace, hopeful because his kingdom is ever coming, and willing to work in the Lord's service, for in his labour there is rest. Help the good man to pray some bolder prayer; help the timid man to put out his soul in one act of faith; disappoint the bad man; when the cruel man is seeking his prey, let sudden darkness fall upon him and rest upon his eyes like a load. The Lord thus undertake for us, guide us, uphold us; give us wisdom, grace, purity, strength, and patience, and all the fruits of the Spirit. Let the Holy Ghost be our life, and light, and joy; quicken our spiritual discernment that we may see things that are not seen; so excite our highest sensibilities as to enable us to respond with instant and grateful love to all the appeals of thy truth. Thou alone canst renew human life, and establish it in everlasting blessedness. Truly thou workest in mystery, yet are the results of thy work beautiful and noble exceedingly. Thou hidest thyself in the chambers of our heart, so that none can see thee,

and yet we know that thou art there by the flooding love which overflows our being, by the heavenward desires which stir our nature with blessed unrest, and by the lofty power with which we are enabled to do all the common work of life. Abide with us! When thou goest, our light is put out; when thou returnest, no shadow can be found upon us. In the light of thy mercy we see all our guilt; in the sweetness of thy love we feel the bitterness of our sin. Abide with us! By thy word we see the folly of our own wisdom; by thy Holy Spirit we know the wickedness of the devil. Abide with us! Where our sin abounds let thy grace much more abound. Shame us by the incessancy of thy love, rather than destroy us by thy great power. O loving One, patient, tender, abide with us! And to God who made us, and to God who redeemed us with an infinite price, to the Holy Ghost, the God who sanctifieth us, be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, world without end. Amen.

Chapter iii. 7-9.

"And a great multitude from Galilee followed him. . . . A great multitude came unto him. . . . Because of the multitude."

CHRIST'S RELATION TO GREAT MULTITUDES.

WHY were these multitudes so urgent? Why was there any multitude at all? The man is simple, gracious, tender, sympathetic: why should there have been such a display of public interest in his ministry and action? He called his discourses "sayings," and he said they were his own—"these sayings of mine." Sometimes he spoke sharply, critically, with no mistake as to his moral purposes; the denunciation was explicit and tremendous; the beatitudes were tender, profound healing: why all this multitudinousness? We might have expected a few kindred hearts to follow such a ministry; but all the world went after him. There must be some explanation of this: what is that explanation? There are class preachers. We know the epithets which belong to them as of right; a superficial, transient, partly illegitimate right or claim; they are profound, polished, finished; exquisite, tasteful, brilliant, magnificent: but the world cares nothing about them, as a world—a grand, complete humanity. Those who do care for them care very much. The Gospel can fascinate classes; the Gospel can talk all languages, live in all climates, adapt itself to all circumstances; it can have an academy, it can go where people can neither read nor write; but the Gospel can do more than fascinate classes and sections of human nature. This is the

explanation of Christ's ministry, in all its graciousness, in all its power of healing: he touched the universal heart. There was strength in Christ's teaching for everybody, for that everybody which is manhood. He did not speak to representatives, or recognise merely and exclusively aspects and phases of life; he poured his wisdom and his love into the heart of the world, and that heart knew him; if sometimes the testimony was reluctant, yet in the issue it was emphatic, fervent, overwhelming. There is a music which is for classes. We know the epithets which belong to that partial music; we know the illegitimate claims which are put in to understand it; we know the simulated intelligence with which the most consummate ignorance listens to it; it is classic music. Poor music! that it should ever be so debased as to accept an epithet. Music needs no qualifying terms. There is a music that belongs to the world; the moment it is uttered the world's heart answers it; it belongs to the child, the mother, the nurse, the shepherd on the mountains, the merchant in the city; the moment the right notes are uttered the whole world takes up those notes, and everywhere they are heard expressing emotions of the moment, or hinting at emotions deep as life, lasting as duration. So it is with the gospel of Jesus Christ. You can minimise it; you can found an academy with it; you can so speak it that nobody will either understand it or feel it; you can crucify the gospel as you crucified its Author. There is a witchery and influence that cannot be explained. You think you can unravel the mystery, and tell some brother man exactly how it is, and when you have completed your analysis you find you have simply mistaken the origin, and the drift, and the issue of your purpose.

What is, then, the influence that touches great multitudes? It is an influence which often disregards, we need not say despises, classes. Luther said, "I take no notice of the doctors who are present, of whom there may be twelve; I preach to the young men and maidens, and the poor, of whom there are two thousand." That was Christlike. When Jesus did turn to the classes it was with a look of denunciation; if any pity mingled with that denunciation it made but a painful irony. Scribes, Pharisees, rich, proud, selfish people; on all these he turned a

face full of displeasure. He would not accept their patronage; he paid no attention either to their commendation or their flattery or their displeasure and repudiation; he was the Son of man,—in that title, in all its music, you have the explanation of these multitudes that followed him, and thronged him, and drew out of him all that he came to give the world. As a preacher you can have—that is to say, it lies within your power—the very selectest congregation that ever gathered. It lies within your power, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, to have the poor, and the young, and all kinds of men round about your pulpit, as thirsty men go where the fountain is, as hungry men flee with what strength is left to the house of bread. These multitudes are arguments. If they were mere mobs no heed need be paid to them. They are not mobs, they are illustrations, expositions; they tell on the human and needy side what Christ is telling on the divine and all-supplying side of this marvellous history. Men are not aware of all they are doing. To see men hastening to the house of prayer is, when properly understood and weighed, to see a new and exquisite aspect of Providence, to see a high and noble view of the human soul. Every man who so flies to the altar, hastes with the eagerness of hunger to God's house, condemns the world, in very deed tramples it under foot, and says by that very act of going into the sanctuary with a right purpose, The world cannot satisfy me: I pant for heaven as the hart panteth after the waterbrooks.

The great multitudes that thronged Christ were not to be regarded only in a statistical way. They are rather to be interpreted as expressing a universal interest because a universal need. No subject can draw and permanently hold such great multitudes as the Gospel. Why? Curiosity has its momentary crowd, but the reason is assignable, and intelligible, and sometimes despicable. Novelty of this kind or that has its transient success, but the Gospel has not only a momentary fascination, but an enduring influence and a growing power over all who come within the mystery of its touch. Look at a congregation gathered to see Christ, as revealed in his Word, and what a spectacle it is! All men are there, in type, in characteristic, in symbolic need, in representative energy; the old man is sure that there will be

some word for grey hairs, and leaning on the top of his staff he waits for his portion of meat; and the little child is sure that there will be some bright sentence, some parabolical outline; maybe some pathetic story, briefly told, with the urgency of earnestness, not with the elaborateness of mere artistic gift and passion; the humblest soul says to itself, My word will come presently; this preacher never neglects the humble, untaught, but necessitous soul. Let him talk in his grandest sentences for a while, he will not forget the poor: I wait. Broken hearts come to Christ's congregation, or altar, or Cross, for healing. The sanctuary that ignores broken hearts ignores the Cross whose name it desecrates. The sanctuary was built for the broken heart; not for the strong, mighty, gay, rich, flourishing, domineering, but for the shattered and the contrite, the lonely and the sad, the self-convicted sinner who cries in the very silence of agony, "What must I do to be saved?" So long as men are conscious of sin, and conscious of the need of salvation, the multitude following Christ will be very large, yet it will increase in number, and in expectancy and urgency; its very attitude shall be a prayer, its earnestness shall be a prevailing plea. A marvellous spectacle is any Christian congregation. The difficulty of the preacher is that so few people recognise the diversity of the congregation, and make allowance for a ministry that would follow the scale of Christ's own method of meeting human need. The selfishness of the congregation is seen in that every individual himself wants all the service. He cannot have it. The Christ-like preacher must follow the lines of Christ: how high he is now, and anon how low down, walking amidst our very feet, and looking at our footprints as if haply he might interpret them into some attitude or direction that would betoken the state of our spirit; how profound in simplicity, how generous in concession, how condescending in taking up a little child and hugging the dear creature, and how tremendous in rebuking the men who have the patronage of the dead *ex cathedrâ*.

Christ had the multitudes because he spoke to the multitudes. No subject can so deeply affect great multitudes as the Gospel. It develops our humanity; it reaches and strengthens the point of fellowship. This Gospel handles the matter of individu-

ality very delicately, but very fully. For a time the man, individual, singular, is everything; he is talked to as if there were nobody else in the universe but himself and God; yet immediately he is put down, and made of the multitudes that constitute humanity; and then he feels himself in totally other and new and enlarging relations; his vanity is reproved, his self-sufficiency is rebuked, he feels that he needs a friend on the right hand, and the left, behind, before, and round about him: he realises God's conception of humanity. Out of that we have the Church, we have fellowship, the commonwealth, the interchange of relations, sympathies, and interests—that marvellous interaction which makes up society in its highest aspects. Hence we have had occasion to say in rebuke to some, that men cannot pray altogether and exclusively alone. Solitary prayer we must have. Secret communion is essential to the full development of the spiritual life; but there is a larger prayer, call it the common prayer, in which I may hear what my brother needs, and my brother may catch from my tones some hint of my sorrow and my necessity; and thus by commingling of supplication, and the common expression of desire, we realise the larger conception of prayer, and create an atmosphere favourable to the cultivation and the progress of our noblest life; "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." Hence, too, we have had occasion to say that no man can read the Bible alone. The Bible is a public book. Whatever was meant for the world must be read by the world in one grand multitudinous voice, if all its music is to be elicited, if all its emphasis is to be delivered with the thunder that is worthy of such eloquence. Here is a verse for one soul, and there is an appeal addressed to the solitary heart, and if some other man were present to hear it part of the message would be lost. The Bible has its corners and sanctuaries and places into which individual souls can repair for special perusal of heaven's will; but taking the book as a whole it realises God's idea when it seizes the whole world, and makes every man hear in the tongue in which he was born the wonderful works of God. Every man has a tongue of his own—to speak of the English tongue is to speak vulgarly. The English tongue has to accommodate itself to every lip over which it falls; has to catch its accent from every tongue that uses it, and has to have suggestions

which can only be imported into it by the unutterable meaning of the heart.

The Gospel thus affects great multitudes by dealing with fundamental questions. If we looked to the Gospel for aught else we should be mistaken and disappointed. The Gospel is not a riddle book; the Gospel is not a series of conundrums which nobody can answer but priests and preachers, ministers and office-bearers: the Bible is the people's book, it belongs to the common humanity; men who can barely spell can draw out of it living water. If this Gospel were a mere exercise in grammar, then only grammarians could be saved. When we rebuke grammarians they do not understand us; but what did a grammarian ever understand? He says, We must have grammar. Certainly; we must have vessels to hold the water; but it is the water that quenches the thirst. The meaning is beyond the letter, not in any sense of despising the letter, but in the sense of having a meaning to convey which the most significant symbols fail adequately to typify. Hence Christ's need of the hereafter. The present time was too small for him; it caged and barred him; so he must needs often say:—Hereafter ye shall see: hereafter ye shall know: what thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter. Time would be a very small cage to live in if it had not a door somewhere in it that opened on eternity: thus we get content and rest and assurance of hope; we say, This time-day is not long enough for us, but it opens upon a day that never darkens into night. So the Gospel affects great multitudes variously and profoundly; teaching patience to some, giving hope to all, and blessing the soul with an assurance that by-and-by we shall know as we are known; see as we are seen, and have access into the wider spaces, yea, into the infinite liberties of God's eternal revelation, as a man might reveal himself face to face with a friend he loved.

No subject can so lastingly bless the multitude as the Gospel. It is not a sensation, an impression, it is in no sense a merely momentary feeling; it is a conviction, a persuasion, a regeneration, a new life. There are theories that are cheerful, vivacious almost to impertinence and insolence, when everything is quiet

and bright and prosperous; but they have an ungrateful way of dropping off from the pilgrims' side when the road is very steep and the valley is very dark, or the wind is very cold. There are a thousand such theories lying dead at the mouth of the valley yonder; go and pick them up if you have peculiar taste for gathering things that are dead and never can be revived. They were lovely for a time, quite blooming little impertinences, with a smart way of talking, and a glib way of criticising the universe, and a haughty way of pronouncing upon all things, from trinities down to insects. They are lying yonder, dead, a thousand thick; go and make what you can of them. This Christ of God never leaves, never forsakes, the souls that put their trust in him; he is most when we need him most, tenderest when we are sick; and if a lamb is shorn he goes out to feel the wind before he lets the shorn lamb go out to full exposure. Gentle Jesus, gentle Shepherd, loving Lord, where we cannot understand the deity we can feel thy motherliness, and such motherliness means deity.

How did Christ exercise his influence? He never lowered his moral tone. He never made the Ten Commandments into nine, or took away three of them to accommodate some rich young ruler that was willing to bestow a very dignified patronage upon the kingdom of God. He never said, You must not strive after academic justice; it is well enough to hear ideal theorists talk about ideal righteousness, but you must do what you can, and above all things never make righteousness a discipline or a burden. No such speech did Christ ever teach to men; he said, Unless a man take up his cross he cannot come; except a man deny—not a habit or a custom, but—himself, he cannot be my disciple. Suicide begins regeneration. We have now an adaptable morality. We are tempted to say to the erring public, Dear friends, what do you want? Jesus Christ never talked so to the multitude. He spake the Commandment, he delivered himself as a king; he commanded, he uttered the decree; yet when he came to deal with men how gracious he was, and meek and gentle, but always making his gentleness the conductor of his righteousness. His pity never conducted men past the law in any evasive sense; rather did that pity

mysteriously fulfil the law, and show that where there is no mercy there can be no justice. Never did Jesus Christ use his influence with the multitudes to promote selfish objects. He came to bless men, to save men, to do men good on every hand; he did "great things" according to this chapter,—"A great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him." Whatever he did was great. The great man makes great occasions. Even the simplest sayings of Christ root themselves in his deity. There are sentences we think we can understand, but when we come into close quarters with them we find they go back syllable by syllable, up, up to the eternal throne. There is no simplicity in Christ that can be interpreted as meaning mere shallowness. Never did Jesus Christ do anything that was not in the heart of it great; when he did it, it might look easy enough, but it was the King that did it. The heavens look well shaped, but it was not man's clumsy hand that rounded the sky; the stars are all peaceable as if they were filled with a spirit of content. How serene they are in their brightness! It looks quite easy to make these stars; yet it was God that made them, and Omnipotence makes all things easy; but who, God only excepted, has omnipotence? When his popularity rolled through the land, and when the people came to be healed, and pressed upon him to be touched; when men afflicted with plagues and unclean spirits came before him, and cried out, "Thou art the Son of God," he said, I do not want you to preach my doctrine. For reasons we cannot understand, Christ might forbid even the saintliest men to anticipate some of his revelations; but by an accommodation that could well vindicate itself we may learn from such prohibitions as are given in this chapter that Christ will not be revealed by unclean spirits. He says in effect, Do not talk about my divine sonship, do not reveal my deity; it is not for your lips to use holy words. The bad man cannot reveal the Son of God; the hollow-hearted, self-seeking preacher cannot preach Christ's Gospel; he may preach about it, but he cannot deliver the message that whosoever will may come and be saved, and the chief of sinners is the chief guest at Christ's love-table, at Christ's redeeming Cross.

A message of this kind should be uttered with the tears of

the heart, with the very agony of love, with a self-prostration which men cannot understand, but which adds ineffable value to every message that is delivered. If we would reveal the deity of Christ we must ourselves be divine men, in the sense of being pure of heart, lofty and incorruptible in purpose, unselfish in spirit, marked through and through, all over, not with the image, but with the meaning of the Cross. Do I speak to some man who has no multitude to talk to? I would not discourage him. Sometimes one man is a multitude. Do not be victimised by merely statistical lines and numbers. If Christ will come where there are two or three gathered together in his name we ought not to be ashamed to make such a convocation a great occasion. What Christ accepts surely it does not lie within our right to despise or reject. On the other hand, let us be careful lest we make the Gospel a message to a class, lest we be damned by respectability. Our message is to the whole world, and wherever there is a multitude that multitude belongs to the humblest minister amongst us. The preacher does not rule, so to say, morally and influentially over his own numerable congregation; the humblest preacher that preaches Christ is in a sense the preacher to the greatest multitude that ever assembled. Let us hold not only the unity of the faith, but consequently the unity of the Church.

Chapter iv.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

[An Analysis.]

1. And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

2. And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

3. Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:

4. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

5. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

6. But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

7. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

8. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

9. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

10. And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

11. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

12. That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

13. And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

14. The sower soweth the word.

15. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

16. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

17. And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: after-

wards, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

18. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

19. And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

20. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

THE work of Christ and the general preaching of the Gospel are represented in this simple illustration. From it we learn—1. That a general proclamation is attended by particular results. This is notable, because one would have imagined that any declaration of God's will would have elicited an instantaneous, universal, and satisfactory response. The only difference which could have been supposed would be that each would be striving to excel the other in prompt and reverent obedience. 2. We learn, secondly, that those particular results are not to be attributed to any special arrangement on the part of the sower. The sower went forth to sow the whole field, at the same time, with the same seed, and with the same purpose; with entire impartiality he moved along the courses of the field, and scattered the grain on the right hand and on the left. Looking at the case from his point of view, we might have expected that his labours would have been productive of the most satisfactory results. Sowers cannot control harvests. They may sow well, and be mocked by a lean and withered harvest. This marks not only a limitation of power on the part of man, but on the part of God also in moral operations. No man can be compelled to bring forth fruit unto God. A man may receive the best seed and let it rot; he may live under the most fertilising influences, and yet be barren of all holy fruits. The startling practical reflection suggested by this circumstance is, that men are not saved by having opportunities, but by improving them. It is no light consideration that with God himself for a sower we may be disappointed in the fruitfulness and quality of the harvest. This refutes the sophism, that if the Gospel were properly proclaimed, men would yield to it. The fault is not in the instrumentality. The ministry of Jesus Christ was in certain aspects a failure; there were vast breadths of the field which he sowed with a

liberal hand, which bore no trace of his service. The world is not perishing for lack of good preaching. Never was preaching so excellent and so abundant as it is to-day, yet hardly one token of harvest can be seen. We may learn—3. That hearers must themselves supply the conditions of spiritual success. Look at the particulars for illustration: The wayside hearer listens to the word, but understandeth (regardeth) it not, and from want of attention the enemy is suffered to "catch away that which was sown in heart." The condition which this hearer should have brought with him is meditation. The word touched him only by the outside; he gave it no lodgment in his heart, never watered the seed, never protected the fences, never opened his spirit to its power. The seed was good, the soil was bad; the sower was God, the enemy the devil. See how the case stands: the sower is God, the field is the heart, the destroyer is the devil; and in order to disappoint the enemy, the heart must co-operate with God. Take the stony-ground hearer. He listens to the word with gladness. He thinks it a pleasant sound, and while the music is in his ear, he resolves to profit by the Holy Word. What condition is wanting in his case? It is well named "root in himself"; no reality and depth of nature; empty, trifling, unreflecting; easily moved, self-indulgent, pliable; all right in sunshine, but cowardly in darkness; loving the Gospel sound, but lacking courage to endure anything for the Gospel's sake. Such a hearer brings much disappointment to his minister. The starting tear, the responsive gleam, the ready assent, are mistaken by being over-valued by the zealous preacher. No man can live to much purpose who has "no root in himself," nothing upon which even God can work. Mark the possibility of exhausting one's manhood; throwing away, or allowing to die out, the germ which was given to be cultured and expanded into fruitfulness towards God! Think of a man being dead at the roots! The thorny-ground hearer is represented in all congregations: the seed is good, the soil itself even may not be of the worst quality; the man is simply preoccupied; his idea is that life depends entirely upon his own exertions, and he consequently works as if he had no spiritual sources to draw upon. Give him a perpetual Sabbath, and he will be attentive, and perhaps partly religious; but as the working-week begins, the old

tyrannous mammon-spirit masters him. There is an influence which seems to be born, or at least revived, every Monday morning, which overpowers the partial religiousness of the Sabbath. It is not to be understood that religious men are exempt from the cares of this world, or even the deceitfulness of riches; they have them all, but the spirit that is in them is greater than the spirit that is in the world, and they thereby overcome.

[The expression—"the deceitfulness of riches," is an excellent text for a sermon to the busy. It may also be the foundation of a discourse to young merchants. The deceitfulness is shown in several ways, such, for example, as—"I am laying up for a rainy day"; "I care nothing for wealth, except to do good with it"; when I have realised a sufficient sum, I shall spend the remainder in works of benevolence." All these are sophisms. The rainy day may never come; the rich man seldom does as much good as he did when he was not half so wealthy; money likes money, and the difficulty is to know when a man has "sufficient." The subject might then be viewed in a graver aspect, viz. :—the power of riches to choke the divine word in man Think of a man selling his aspirations, his faculties, his capacities, selling his soul for gold! This love of money does not come upon a man all at once, but "deceitfully," until a nature which might have been open and generous becomes shrivelled and impenetrable.]

Each class of hearers may be specially treated—

Wayside: Opportunity given: Opportunity lost: A constantly watchful enemy.

Stony Ground: Impulsiveness: Shallowness: Want of conviction and fortitude.

Thorns: Mental pre-occupation: Thoughtlessness: Worldly-mindedness.

Good Ground: Moral preparation: Earnestness: Visible reward in fruitfulness, which reward is to constitute the most evident proof of the reality of the divine life in the soul.

The whole parable may be used as showing the operation of four powerful influences in human life. (1) The influence of the devil as seen in the wayside hearers. (2) The influence of frivolity as seen in the stony-ground hearers. (3) The influence of

worldliness as seen in the thorny-ground hearers. (4) The influence of earnestness as seen in the good-ground hearers.

21. And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

22. For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

23. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

24. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.

25. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

The subject is: Christian life viewed as a revelation, a responsibility, and a law.

I. As a revelation: (*a*) It is to be luminous; (*b*) it is to be properly placed in the midst of society. The gospel is a great revealing power. In all truth there is power of exposure and judgment; how much more in the highest truth of all!

II. As a responsibility: (*a*) Stewardship in doctrine; (*b*) stewardship in action.

III. As a law: (*a*) Usefulness is productiveness; (*b*) indolence is ruin.

The kingdom of Christ is thus shown to be founded on law. Man never becomes more than a subject: Christ never less than a king.

26. And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground:

27. And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up he knoweth not how.

28. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

29. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

(1) Though the sower sleep after his labour, yet the process of germination goes on night and day. (2) Simple beginnings and practical results may be connected by mysterious processes: "he knoweth not how." There is a point in Christian work where knowledge must yield to mystery. (3) As the work of the sower is assisted by natural processes ("the earth bringeth forth of itself," etc.), so the seed of truth is aided by the natural conscience and aspiration which God has given to all men. (4) The

mysteriousness of processes ought not to deter from reaping the harvest. The spiritual labourer may learn from the husbandman.

30. And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

31. It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:

32. But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

(1) Small beginnings may have great endings. (*a*) This should encourage all holy labourers; (*b*) this should alarm all wicked men. (2) Vitality more important than magnitude. (*a*) This applies to creeds; (*b*) to church agencies and organisations; (*c*) to a public profession of faith. (3) The least thing in nature a better illustration of divine truth than the greatest object in art. The least of all seeds more fitly represents the kingdom of heaven than the most elaborate of all statuary. The natural flower is a revelation of God, the artificial flower is a proof of the skill of man. It should be noticed that human art is never referred to in the Scripture as illustrating the divine nature and purposes, but continual reference is made to all the works of creation. God illustrates himself by himself.

33. And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.

34. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

This text may be used as supplying three lessons as to the duties of the Christian teacher. (1) He must adapt himself to his hearers. Are they young? Are they educated? Are they courageous? Are they surrounded by any peculiar circumstances? (2) He must consider his hearers rather than himself. This was Jesus Christ's method. The question should be not what pleases the preacher's taste, but what is most required by the spiritual condition of the people. (3) He must increase his communication of truth and light according to the progress of his scholars. Reticence is power. In teaching children the teacher does not dazzle them by the splendour of his attainments, he adapts the light to the strength of their mental vision. The preacher should always know more of divine truth than the hearer. Christ's

method of imparting knowledge is, so far as we can infer, unchanged. He has yet more light to shed upon his word.

35. And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

36. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

37. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

38. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

39. And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

41. And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

(1) The organised Church in peril,—Christ and his disciples were all in this tempest. (2) Dangers beset the Church even whilst it is carrying out the express commands of Christ,—Jesus himself bade them pass over unto the other side. (3) The spirit of Christ, not the body of Christ, must save the Church in all peril. The sleeping body was in the vessel, but it exercised no influence upon the storm. It is possible to have an embalmed Christ, and yet to have no Christianity. It is also possible to have the letter of Christ's word without the spirit and power of his truth. (4) Jesus Christ answering the personal appeal of the imperilled Church. The power of the servant is often exhausted,—exhausted power should betake itself to supplication. (5) All the perils of the Church may be successfully encountered by profound faith in God (v. 40).

Chapter iv. 41.

"What manner of man is this?"

THE UNKNOWN QUANTITY IN CHRIST.

THERE was, of course, no doubt upon the mind of the disciples that Jesus Christ was a man, yet there was something about him which very often made them look upon him with surprise and even bewilderment. For a time things would go on in an ordinary course, and then, quite suddenly, Jesus Christ would utter a tone unlike all other tones, and the disciples would be startled by the unusual music. For days together they would be able to look upon his face as the face of a gentle brother, pensive, indeed, and much worn, yet quite human, and most tender. Then, in an unexpected moment, there would come into that brother's face a look, unlike all other looks; a gleam of spiritual light,—a flush and colour showing that through his heart there had just passed a wave of more than mortal life, and he would look more like an angel than a man. He was a man; no doubt at all about that; yet there was something about him that there was about nobody else; even when he appeared to be but a common stranger, there was a power in his speech which made men's hearts burn. He was a man, but a man *plus*, to say the least of it. There was in him an unknown quantity, and it is about this unknown quantity that I propose now to say one or two things that may help our wonder to become reverent and loving homage.

We shall get a bolder and clearer aspect of the whole case if we begin on common ground, and look at it through one or two earthly parallels. Take, for example, a company of poor, uncultivated, unpretending men; let them all be of one sort, all thoroughly familiar with each other; they talk without restraint; all their remarks proceed upon the same low level; all their

language is marked by the same commonness or vulgarity. Into this company let a gentleman by some means be introduced; let that gentleman disguise himself by putting on the plainest possible clothing; let him adapt himself with the utmost care to his new circumstances; his one object is to resemble most closely the men whose society he has sought. His own familiar friend would not know him through the disguise he has assumed. Given such a case, that man, by one tone, by one movement of his hand, by one glance, may cause all eyes to be turned upon him in wonder, in suspicion, in anxiety! It is felt there is something about him that there is not about any of the others, —he looks plain enough, takes upon himself no airs, sits on a level with the whole company, yet a tone thrilled them, one remark shot through their murky conversation like lightning flashing through darkness. Instantly there is felt to be an unknown quantity among them; they cannot quite recover themselves, there is a stranger in the house,—to each other they would fain say, "What manner of man is this?"

Take a very different scene. Here is a company of educated and most polished gentlemen. They speak various languages; they are at home upon every question of the day; their information, standard and current, is considered extensive and profound. Suppose that by some means they should be brought into contact with a man, clothed in the plainest garb, without pretence of bearing, or one outward sign of superiority, yet, when he speaks, he adds to the information of the most learned, to every discussion he contributes something unique, yet obviously pertinent; to the polish of learning he adds the vigour of originality. Precisely the same resul twould follow in this case as in the other. By so much as he was superior to others, and yet concealed his superiority under an exterior which denoted the utmost lowliness of condition, he would excite and justify the inquiry, "What manner of man is this?"

Now we find that Jesus Christ was constantly puzzling and bewildering men by the action, sometimes subtle and remote, sometimes almost visible and approachable, of an unknown quantity in his nature. He was quite close at hand, yet he

could separate himself from men by an immeasurable distance; when familiarity seemed to be completing itself, one look would recall the old reverence and awe; when equality was just about to be established, a single question would prove the depth of men's ignorance, and send them away to learn the merest alphabet of knowledge.

The argument which comes out of the unknown quantity in Christ may take some such shape as this: It was beneficent, and therefore not from beneath; it was intensely spiritual, and therefore not of the earth, earthy; it was wholly self-sacrificial, and therefore different from ordinary human policy and purpose; it set aside canons, traditions, and standards established and valued by men, and therefore claimed a wisdom superior to the ripest wisdom of all human teachers. All this was the more obvious and impressive, because he was without form or comeliness; he was as a root out of a dry ground; he bore the form of a servant; he made himself of no reputation,—yet out of him there went virtue which healed the incurable, and light which made the saddest lives take heart again. There was in him more than could be quite concealed. The disguise was most wonderful, yet not altogether complete. The cloud was vast and dense, yet it was pierced now and again by shafts of the supreme glory. What was the meaning of this? We boast that no social humiliation can conceal a gentlemen,—through rags and poverty and weakness, there will come signs of gentle blood or noble spirit; be it so, we rejoice in it as one of our most pleasant and gratifying social truths; what if we carry our own reasoning one point higher, and inquire whether, as no disguise can conceal a gentleman, it is possible that any condescension can put God in total eclipse.

We have said that the unknown quantity in Christ was beneficent, and therefore not from beneath. The proof of this is open to any reader, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." Look at the idea of saving the world! Regard it in what light we may, there is no other idea which

can compare with it in point of sublimity of goodness. If we had met with it in any heathen writer, we should have been constrained to point it out as the most marvellous conception of the human mind. The father says, Save the family; the citizen says, Save the city; the patriot says, Save the country. So far good: this is beneficent, this is noble; yet, when these voices have ceased, the Son of man says, Save the world! There is the unknown quantity—the subtle, mysterious, inexplicable something, which separates the man from all other men, and causes us to exclaim, "What manner of man is this?"

Observe, with special care, that it is not needful that we should even make a profession of religion in order to know somewhat of the value of this idea of saving a world. We take it merely as an idea; we take it as if we had found it written by an unknown hand in the obscurest of pagan books; we claim for it no sectarian interpretation; we put aside all sectarian interpretation; we put aside all Church mediums of vision as standards of measurement: there stands in its own simplicity the fact that some man, somewhere, at some time, proposed to save the world! To save it, and therefore his heart was full of mercy—to save the world, and therefore his mind was as comprehensive as his heart was generous. And this he proposed to do, not when great ideas had become familiar, but when exclusiveness was predominant, when lines hard and fast had mapped off the little provinces of human regard and trust. And more than this: he came into the world to save it; this was his original purpose: it did not gradually lay hold upon him: it was not something that grew imperceptibly, and at last was found to be a ruling passion. It was a complete thought from the first. Sometimes men surprise themselves by the greatness of their achievements: warriors conquer more provinces than they originally intended to attack; inquirers are led from little to much, in carrying out their great schemes; discoverers, travellers, and projectors of all kinds learn the possible from the actual, and by the help of the known grope their way to the unknown: but here is a man who came with a complete plan, who never amended his scheme, who owed nothing to human suggestion—a man who at the first said, "I came to save the world," and at the last commanded, "Preach

the Gospel to every creature"; and this in the face of opposition the most relentless, and of death the most ignominious. What manner of man is this?

We say that Alexander conquered the world, and then cried because there was not another world to conquer. But Alexander's notion of the world would now excite the smile of a schoolboy. Alexander was as much surprised by his exaggerated successes as were the soldiers whom he led; and lastly, his rapacity can be accounted for on principles neither very profound nor very creditable.

The unknown quantity in Christ was spiritual, and therefore not of the earth, earthy: "My kingdom is not of this world." "Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world." "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "They that worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth." We feel that these words are not earthly: they are ghostly; they are spiritual; they are full of mystery, mystery which would affright us, but that the speaker came to save the world. He reveals himself as a contradiction: he is here, yet he is not here; he is on the earth, yet he is in heaven; he was alone, yet not alone; Mary was his mother, yet before Abraham was, he was; he needed no sword, for more than twelve legions of angels were within call; he revealed the Father; he told men of heavenly things; he spoke of faith as man's supreme power; he treated all earthly things as of less than secondary consideration. How all this involves the presence of an unknown quantity! Whence was this spiritual Christ? How came he to have at his girdle keys which could open invisible kingdoms? Whence his power to give men wider and clearer vision in the empire of truth? How is it that Christ always saw farther than the men who were around him? Why should he have been more at home in the spiritual than in the material? These questions are not to be treated carelessly. In the consideration of so extraordinary a life as Jesus Christ's, they are vital, and every honest student will linger upon their anxious and reverent consideration. Jesus Christ's earthly course as a public worker was intensely excited; yet every day was made

serene by "the power of an endless life." There is foam on the stormy billow, but the earth itself flies in silent and tranquil speed through its appointed course, though seas be tempest driven. The volcano shakes with terrible agitation, but its uproar never flutters the peace of the great globe. So in Christ, there was a life within life—a mystery, a quantity unknown—so that when the storm was angriest, through all the thunder of men's vengeance, he breathed the peculiar benediction of peace: "My peace I give unto you." What manner of man is this? The wonderful conjunction of unequalled trouble and unspeakable peace, seen in the life of Jesus Christ, cannot be figured except by the greatest works of the hand of God: as the fierce wind desolates the forest, maddens the sea, and throws down the fabrics of men, yet never arrests for a moment the velocity of the earth, so the tempests of human opposition, battering with incessant fury upon the life of Christ, never touched the eternal calm of his infinite peace.

The unknown quantity in Christ was wholly self-sacrificial, therefore different from ordinary human policy and purpose. "I lay down my life for the sheep." "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." He constantly moved towards the Cross. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." "I am among you as he that serveth." "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Thus we are taken out of ordinary motives, purposes, and methods. This is altogether a new music. We cannot follow this Man, except we take up a Cross. Herein we see the deep truth of his word—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Never man spoke thus before. Hear him: If you would gain your life, lose it! If you would lose your life, gain it! If you would live, you must die first! If you would be crowned, you must be crucified! What manner of man is this? The severest of his critics has never established a charge of selfishness against Jesus Christ. His

self-oblivion and self-expenditure have been left without explanation by the most determined of his opponents. Never did he accept such promotion as men could offer. Never did he consult his own ease at the expense of human suffering. Never did he turn aside that he might escape the Cross. By speaking falsehood he could have avoided humiliation; hypocrisy would have saved him many a frown; hesitation would have helped him out of many a difficulty. Our own selfishness wonders again and again that he did not speak the word of flattery, or tamper with the word of righteousness; yet, though a sentence might have saved him, he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair. In a sense deeper than his revilers intended to express, "He saved others,—himself he could not save"; he so loved as to be lost in self-forgetfulness!

"O for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
Their Saviour's praises speak."

The unknown quantity in Christ set aside canons, traditions, and standards established and valued by men, and therefore claimed a wisdom superior to the ripest wisdom of all human teachers. "It hath been said by them of old time; but I say unto you." "Ye have heard that it hath been said; but I say unto you." This was his tone throughout. Nor was it a tone of boastfulness. Christ's word was not a word of mere antagonism. He never abrogated a truth except by fulfilment, by carrying it to its widest and sublimest applications. "All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?" Jesus taught truth, rather than mere fact; principles, not mere rules; he revealed the universal and the eternal, not merely the local and temporary.

Now look at these suggestions in their unity. The unknown element is of the same quality, so to speak, throughout. It is beneficent, spiritual, self-sacrificial, independent. Not only socially and relatively beneficent, but beneficent up to the point of salvation. Not spiritual, in the limited sense of intellectual, supersensuous, immaterial; it searched the heart, it revealed the

invisible, it opened heaven. Not self-sacrificial in the spurious sense of well-calculated periods of self-assertion and self-withdrawment, but self-sacrificial even unto death—yea, the death of the cross. Not independent in the sense of defiant, self-sufficient, contemptuous, but in the sense of original, complete, omniscient

Given such a character, to account for it! Say it was a dream: the difficulty is increased rather than diminished by the suggestion. Where is the dreamer? Who was he? Where is the man who had heart enough to dream such beneficence, soul enough to dream such spirituality, will enough to dream such self-sacrifice, wisdom enough to dream such originality? Find the dreamer; name him; account for his supremacy. Remember, you must find not only one dreamer, but many. You must find the dreamers of the most ancient prophecies, as well as of doctrines and theories historically Christian. You must, too, find dreamers whose dreams agree with each other, and dreamers who will unitedly, stubbornly, and lyingly avouch as facts what they know to be mere visions and eccentricities of fancy. Here we touch the moral nerve of the whole system. According to the dream theory, men told lies in order to reveal truth; they divested themselves of all honesty in order to save the world; they said, "Thus saith the Lord," when they knew that they were but relating a day-dream, or depicting a fancy! The moral tone of revelation is the decisive answer to the mythical theory; according to that theory, we are driven to the conclusion that the men who fabricated Christ and Christianity, not only dreamed the sublimest of poems, but the most splendid of falsehoods, and mistook those falsehoods as the very foundations of righteous and noble life. Not only so: they dreamed the lies, and then said to the world, If you believe this, you will suffer for it, you will have trials of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; you will be stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword: we tell you our dream as a fact, our falsehood as a truth,—believe, and your life shall be a daily crucifixion. Nay, more! The dreamers themselves suffered for their dream! They were fed with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction. They wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in

dens and caves of the earth. In every city bonds and afflictions awaited them. They were ready, not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when host upon host of fiercest enemies pressed upon them, they exclaimed, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Such were not the men to suffer and die for a lying dream!

Say Jesus Christ was a good man, the best man, the man who realised most perfectly all that is meant by divine inspiration, yet after all was but a man. You aggravate the difficulty unspeakably. Not only have you to account for the most express claim of equality with God, and to explain language infinitely in excess of any inspiration which human capacity could realise or merely human excellence could justify—you have a harder task still to accomplish—you have a stupendous moral difficulty to overcome. If Jesus Christ was but a man, if there was nothing in him that may not in equal degree be in us, if he was only the perfect type of what any man may become—then God gave him an advantage which he has withheld from others, and the want of which occasions us sorrow intolerable, and apprehension the most agonising that can afflict the human mind. He made one perfect man, and left countless millions imperfect; he gave one man inspiration enough to save him from sin, and by withholding that inspiration from others he necessitated their ruin; he showed by one example what he could have made of all men, and yet has entailed upon all men the severest moral degradation and suffering, because something was lacking in the extent of their inspiration!

We find the only satisfactory explanation of the whole mystery of Christ in the facts of revelation. Those facts are many, unique, consistent, sublime. Jesus Christ was the only begotten of the Father: it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell: by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: Jesus Christ, the

same yesterday, to-day, and for ever: Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, Son of God, God the Son, One with the Father, and heir of all things! Take this view of the case, and the solemn mystery becomes filled with light. Standing on this high ground, when men exclaim, "What manner of man is this?" we can answer, Emmanuel! Wonderful! Counsellor! The mighty God! The everlasting Father! The Prince of Peace! There we answer the wonder of the finite with the wisdom of the infinite.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thy riches are unsearchable. The hosts of heaven are thine, so are the gold and the silver and the cattle upon a thousand hills. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. As for thy love it is boundless, and we will say with thy Church in all ages, Thy mercy endureth for ever. We would therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and that we may find grace to help in time of need. Every time is a time of need. We humbly beseech thee therefore to dwell with us. Abide in our heart as in a redeemed and chosen house. Save us in the hour of temptation! Deliver us from all evil influences! Establish our hearts in the love of Christ, that we may never depart from the living God. Grant unto us now to know somewhat of the fulness of thy love, the infinitude of thy nature, the depths of thy heart, the tenderness of thy compassion! May we be filled with amazement, overwhelmed by visions of thy glory, encouraged and strengthened by assurances of thy goodness. We abide near the Cross; we lay our hands upon the one Sacrifice for sin,—Jesus Christ, Son of man and Son of God. As we look upon him crucified, we say with all our heart, God be merciful unto us sinners! Shed upon us the light above the brightness of the sun. Assure us of thy nearness by the interpretation of thy blessed word to our anxious hearts and inquiring minds. May we see the Lord's beauty, and feel that the Lord's hand is upon us. Unto the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, whom we adore as one God, be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, world without end. Amen.

Chapter V.

THE HUMAN AND THE DIVINE.

[An Analysis.]

1. And they came over unto the other side of the sea, in the country of the Gadarenes.

2. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

3. Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains;

4. Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

5. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

6. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

7. And cried, with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not.

8. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

9. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion, for we are many.

10. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

11. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

12. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

13. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea (they were about two thousand); and were choked in the sea.

14. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

15. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

16. And they that saw it told them how it befel to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

17. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

THIS story may be viewed in four aspects :—I. The human; II. The Divine; III. The Diabolic; IV. The Social.

I. The Human. The human aspect is seen both in shadow

and in light:—(1) As seen in shadow: (*a*) man impure,—unclean spirit; (*b*) man dis-socialised,—his dwelling was among the tombs; (*c*) man unrestrained,—no man could tame him, no, not with chains; (*d*) man self-tormented,—crying and cutting himself with stones. (2) As seen in light: (*a*) man tranquillised,—sitting; (*b*) man civilised,—clothed; (*c*) man intellectualised, —in his right mind.

II. The Divine. (1) Christ identified by his holiness; (2) Christ feared for his power; (3) Christ recognised in the realm of spirits.

III. The Diabolic. (1) As showing great resources,—"we are many"; (2) as displaying subordination,—they besought Christ, etc.; (3) as revealing destructiveness,—whatever they touch, man or beast, they destroy.

IV. The Social. (1) Society trembling under manifestations of spiritual power; spiritual power is always more or less mysterious,—"they were afraid." (2) Society caring more for beasts than for men,—they prayed him to depart out of their coasts.

The prayer of the unclean spirits may be regarded as showing the intolerableness of life in hell. They wished to be sent anywhere but to the pit.

Or thus:—

The story may be used as showing at once the greatness and the weakness of man. (1) His greatness,—seen in the fact that many devils can enter into him. Show how men may be great in evil as well as in good,—tyrants, warriors, conspirators, hypocrites, etc. (2) His weakness,—seen in his yielding where he ought to have resisted; in his helplessness when he had once admitted the power of evil into his heart,—seen also in his fear of the only power that could redeem him from its bondage. The last point should be urged as one of great importance,—showing how the tendency of sin is actually to destroy confidence, not only in God as Creator and Preserver, but actually as Redeemer. (*a*) It raises sceptical questions; (*b*) it urges the doctrine of self-elevation.

Or thus:—

The story may be treated as showing some phases of Christ's ministry. (1) Christ caring for one man; (2) Christ's rule over

evil spirits; (3) Christ reconstructing manhood; (4) Christ showing himself the source of all blessings: (*a*) self-control,—"sitting"; (*b*) civilisation,—"clothed"; (*c*) mental restoration,—"in his right mind."

Christ's conduct in this case reveals the fearlessness of his spirit. (1) Holiness is fearless; (2) Philanthropy is fearless; (3) Trust in God is fearless. Show how fearlessness is required of all who follow Christ,—how it is necessary to beneficent activity,—and how it can only be sustained by ever-deepening communion with God. The whole subject may be treated as showing—(1) The Fearlessness; (2) the Aggressiveness; (3) the Beneficence of Christianity.

18. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

19. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

20. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

21. And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea.

(1) The recollection of our Christless state should beget a spirit of distrust in ourselves. The healed man was naturally anxious to remain at the side of his healer. (2) Show the possibility of being under the protection of Christ even though far from his physical presence. The healed man was as surely under the care of Christ when miles away as when within reach of his hand. Christ always pointed towards a spiritual reign, and both incidentally and directly discouraged trust in merely fleshly presence and power.

Christ's answer may be taken as showing how the gospel is to be propagated: (1) It is to be declared at home; (2) it is to be founded on personal experience; (3) it is to acknowledge the power and goodness of God alone.

Every Christian should himself be the chief argument in favour of Christianity. The Christian is not only to have an argument—he is himself to be an argument. The man whose sight was restored said to those who inquired concerning the process of restoration—"One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see." Had he allowed himself to be lured into a discussion

about Moses or the supposed character of Christ, he might have been overcome by superiority of address on the part of his critics; but so long as he confined himself to his own case his position was invincible. The recovered man whose case is given in this chapter could always answer the quibbles of inquirers by a reference to his own experience. What has Christ done for us? What is our present state as compared with our former condition? What is our moral tone? What is our attitude in relation to the future? If we can answer these questions satisfactorily, we have a sufficient reply to all controversial difficulties and to all speculative scepticism.

22. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

23. And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

24. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

The case of the ruler may be treated as showing the instructiveness of domestic affliction. (1) It shows the helplessness even of the greatest men,—the applicant was a ruler, yet his rulership was of no avail in this case. All human influence is limited. (2) It shows the helplessness even of the kindest men, —the applicant was a father, yet all his yearning affection was unable to suggest a remedy for his afflicted child. (3) It shows the need of Christ in every life: looking over the whole chapter, we find a demoniac, a ruler, a child, and a woman who required the services of Jesus Christ.

25. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

26. And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing better, but rather grew worse,

27. When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

28. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

29. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

30. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

31. And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

32. And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

33. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

34. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace and be whole of thy plague.

(1) Human extremity,—the woman had suffered many years, and had spent all, and had become worse rather than better: she may be taken, therefore, as a picture of human extremity. (2) Human earnestness,—though much people thronged the Saviour, and she was weak, yet she found her way to the Healer. This may be taken as illustrative of the power of earnestness in seeking Christ. All of us have to go to Christ through a crowd, —a crowd of objectors, of indifferent persons, of apathetic professors, of quibbling critics, etc.: if we be in earnest, we shall find our way to Christ. (3) Divine sensitiveness. Jesus Christ knew the difference between mere pressure and the touch of loving faith. This shows that mere nearness to Christ is not enough. A man may be in the church, and yet far from the Saviour; a man may be looking at the Cross without seeing the Sacrifice. Expose all the pretences which are founded upon ancestry, nationality, the observance of religious rites, etc. (4) Public Confession. The poor woman drew near, and told him all the truth, and she told it in the hearing of the crowd. Thankfulness should always be courageous and explicit. Where there is a keen appreciation of the work of Christ in the soul, all timidity and hesitation will be overborne by the intensity of thankfulness and joy. This is the true explanation of Christian profession and testimony.

35. While yet he spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

36. As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

37. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

38. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.

39. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

40. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

41. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi: which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise.

42. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

43. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

This part of the incident shows how two views may be taken of the same case. (1) There is the human view,—the child is dead, trouble not the Master. Men see the outside; they deal with facts rather than with principles; they see the circumference, not the centre. (2) There is Christ's view,—only believe; man is called beyond facts, he is called into the sanctuary of God's secret. We often put the period where God himself puts only a comma: we say "dead" when God himself says "sleepeth." Jesus Christ was laughed to scorn when he put a new interpretation upon old facts. All who follow him must expect to hear Christian sentiments and predictions misunderstood and perhaps contemned.

The incident may be treated as showing three things:—(1) Christ not sent for until the last moment; (2) Christ misunderstood when sent for; (3) Christ never sent for in vain.

General Note on the Whole Chapter.

Look at the various instances of healing in this chapter:—Demoniac; woman; child; ruler. We train men to attempt the cure of special diseases, but Jesus Christ treated all afflictions alike of the mind and body, and never did his energy prove insufficient for the demands which were made upon it. What was the secret of the universality of his healing? It was that he infused life into all who came to him in their necessity. All other healing is but local and temporary. The gift of life alone can throw off all diseases, and recover the failing tone of the mind. Jesus Christ never displays surprise, or betrays hesitation, when the most extraordinary cases are brought under his attention. The calmness of his spirit and the perfect mastery of his working incidentally show the fulness of his Godhead. The

cure of the demoniac alone would have made the reputation of any other man. In Christ's case it is written down as an ordinary event, so far as the exercise of his own power is concerned. The speciality is on the side of the sufferer, not on the side of the healer. Christ's interruption on his way to the ruler's house, and his cure of the poor woman, should show that his life is an unceasing ministration of good. He was going towards the house of suffering, yet on his way he healed a woman who had been given up by many physicians! The beneficent act was a kind of parenthesis. There is more history condensed into the very parentheses of Christ's life than can be found in all the volumes of other lives. The parenthetic characteristic of this cure may be dwelt on as showing that even in his movement towards a given point God may be interrupted by the appeal of human necessity.

Chapter v. 28.

"If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole."

THE SPIRITUAL VALUE OF THE NEAR AND VISIBLE.

[An Outline.]

APART from the general treatment which the incident invites, a practical turn may be given to the thought involved in this particular way of stating the case. The afflicted woman did not invoke the whole power of the Godhead; she said that a mere touch was enough. To her simple trust, God was close at hand. She believed that the divine element penetrated and vitalised the outward and visible covering, so much so that to touch the clothes was to touch God himself. The idea is that we need far less proof of God's existence and beneficence than we often demand. We may go too far. We may attempt too much. We seek to convince or silence the gainsayer by elaborate arguments respecting infinitude, immateriality, almightiness, and the like. Thus theology becomes a great intellectual effort. It strains men's thinking; it transcends and overwhelms all that is ordinary; it establishes itself in the secrecy of the clouds. There is something better than all this. God is accessible from a much lower point. He is nigh thee, O man; the shadow of his presence lies around thy whole life! Think not to lay a line upon the courses of his infinitude, or to gather into one thunderous note all the voices of his eternity. Do not strain thy poor strength or endanger thy feeble brain by long-continued and ambitious effort to find out God. Be simple in thy methods, be trustful in thy spirit Pluck a spike of grass, a wild flower, a tender leaf of the spring—touch the hem of his garment, and thou shalt find health. There are great globes of fire; there are also little globes of water: begin with the latter,—thou wilt find God even in these frail crystal habitations.

Apply this thought (1) to spiritual existences. If I touch but a grain of sand, I find the Mighty One. Who made it? Who can destroy it? Who can send it away to some other world? If I touch only a bud, I touch the King's garment. Who can make one like it? Who can improve its beauty? Whose hand is cunning enough to add one charm to its shape or one tint to its colour? We need not dazzle the atheist's eyes with the light of other worlds; we can show him God's signature in every limb of his own body: in every hair of his own head. Apply this thought (2) to the scheme of spiritual providence. Limit the view to one life,—touch but the hem of the garment. Review your own life from infancy, through youth, along the tortuous paths of manifold experience, up to the vigour of full manhood. What of extrication from difficulties? What of unexpected turns and hair-breadth escapes? What of concessions yielded without argument, of helps rendered by unlikely hands? The theory of chance is a theory of difficulty, not to say a theory of absurdity. Apply this thought (3) to the processes of spiritual education. Some of us can never get beyond the hem of the garment. Meanwhile, it is enough. Others are admitted to high intercourse: they know the secret of the Lord: finding their way far beyond the limitation of the mere letter, they see the spiritual purpose of divine government, and enjoy the inexpressible communion of the Holy Ghost. It is possible that the former may have as true and as efficient a faith as the latter. May they not have even a stronger faith? Is it a great thing to see God in heavens rich with systems of suns? Shall they be praised for their faith who hear God in the thunder, or who say of the lightning, Lo! this is the eye of the Lord? It is a grander faith, surely, which can see God in a speck of dust, and touch him in the hem of a garment. This was Christ's measurement of faith. It was ever the simplicity rather than the so-called sublimity of faith which Christ praised. He ever sought to train man's faith downwards as well as upwards. "Ye believe in God; believe also in me,"—in me, the human, visible, rejected Christ,—believe in the lower as well as the higher manifestations of God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Apply this thought (4) to the uses of spiritual ordinances. The hymn, the prayer, the lesson, the mere form itself, may do men good.

The commonest hearer who touches but the hem of the garment may be healed and comforted, as well as the student who can read deep things, and understand high counsels and purposes.

Application: The hand must touch Christ,—not an apostle, or minister, or an angel,—but God the Son, in whom alone there is redeeming life. He "only hath immortality." You may have "touched" many without benefit; touch him, and you will live!

NOTES.

(*From the "Speaker's Commentary."*)

"I shall be whole" (ver. 28). "Literally, I shall be saved, *i.e.*, made whole." It was natural that expositors of Holy Scripture should see in this woman a type of the Jewish Church, bleeding to death, and tortured by superstitious, inefficacious, tedious, and costly treatment.

"And straightway," etc. (ver. 29). The immediate effect was the drying up of the source of her malady. This she felt inwardly, a sensation assuring her that the cure was complete. St. Mark gives details, such as St. Peter must have dwelt upon frequently, both for their significance and their resemblance to miraculous works wrought afterwards by himself in the name of Jesus. Cf. Acts iii. 6, 7; v. 15; ix. 34, 38.

"And Jesus . . . gone out of him" (ver. 30). Or, "*And immediately Jesus having perceived in himself* (or recognised inwardly) *that the virtue* (literally, the power) *had gone forth from him.*" This statement, taken from our Lord's own word (Luke viii. 46), throws some light on the nature of the miraculous effluence from the Person of our Saviour. It was physical in its operation—the woman felt the result in her body—but spiritual in its source and condition. Our Lord recognised the fact that the indwelling virtue had been drawn forth by an act of faith.

"And his disciples" (ver. 31). St. Luke notices that St. Peter was, as usual, the spokesman. The question was natural, but interesting as proving that no mere bodily sensation called the attention of Jesus to what was done.

"But the woman" (ver. 33). Each word indicates the inward struggle of the woman. She knew that what had been done in her was a result of her own act, without permission from Jesus, and she could scarcely hope that the faith which suggested it would be accepted as genuine; hence the terror and trembling, the sudden prostration, and the full confession.

"And be whole" (ver. 34). A different word from that used in v. 28, giving an assurance of restoration to perfect health, such as was still needed by the woman. This is recorded expressly by St. Mark alone, but it is implied by other words of our Lord in St. Matthew and St. Luke.

Chapter vi.

HEROD AND HERODIAS.

[An Analysis.]

1. And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2. And when the Sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

(1) CHRISTIAN doctrine applicable to all classes of men; (2) Christian doctrine calculated to excite the pro foundest surprise; (3) Christian doctrine always conveying the impression of unique power; (4) Christian doctrine showing the insignificance of the personality of its teachers. Even Christ himself, according to the flesh, seemed poor and inadequate when viewed in the light of the wondrous revelations which he made to the world.

The questions put by those who heard Jesus Christ show—(1) That even the greatest speakers cannot escape personal criticism. It is often suggested that earnest men succeed in drawing the attention of their hearers to the doctrine rather than to the speaker, but the life of Christ is a proof to the contrary; (2) that prejudiced hearers will sacrifice the truth because of the objectionableness of the instrument through which it is conveyed; (3) that such hearers actually dishonour God in their attempt to exalt him, because they deny his power to turn the humblest, poorest agency to the highest uses.

This incident may be treated as showing some of the difficulties of the Christian ministry: (1) The difficulty of locality,—Jesus was now in "his own country;" (2) the difficulty of personality,—ancestry, appearance, poverty, earnestness considered as

indicative of presumption; all enter into this difficulty of personality. There is a still deeper truth underlying this difficulty:—Individuality of spirit, claim, manner, always provokes criticism. The glory of the highest revelation of Christianity is that personality is superseded by spirituality. The speaker is to be forgotten in the speech. When both personality and doctrine are to be considered, the danger is that the former may be made to assume undue prominence. Instead of inquiring, What is said? the inquiry will be, Who said it? Personality is a mere question of detail in comparison with the truths which nourish and save the soul.

4. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

(1) Jesus Christ taking his stand upon a great principle; (2) Jesus Christ claiming his prophetic character in the face of opposition.

This answer may be regarded as showing the true method of encountering difficulties and dealing with opponents. Jesus Christ might have defended his relatives against the sneers of the critics. He might also have availed himself of the *tu quoque* argument, and shown how little reason his censors had to make remarks about his social connections. Were the servants inspired with the spirit of the Master, they would show corresponding independence and courage. It is remarkable that the people should have so boldly condemned any part of Christ's ministry when they daily saw how great was his power in working miracles. They never, so far as can be discovered from the narrative, show any fear of his wonderful power. They appear to have treated him with as much freedom and insolence as if he had never shown his almighty influence over the laws of nature.

5. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

This statement (1) refutes the notion that where there is a true ministry there will be great success; (2) shows the tremendous difficulties which the human will can oppose to the highest purposes of God; (3) justifies the true worker in leaving the sphere

in which he has been unsuccessful, to carry on his work under more favourable circumstances. The sphere has much to do with the development of the man. It is unreasonable to teach that a minister can be equally useful in all places. This remark must not be abused by the supposition that, because a man cannot get on where he is, he would infallibly get on somewhere else. Only in so far as Christ has called him to do his work will it be true of him that he will find a sphere in which he can work successfully.

7. And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

8. And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:

9. But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.

10. And he said unto them, in what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

(1) Christ the originator of missionary effort; (2) Christ the source of missionary power; (3) Christ the provider of missionary wants. There is no detail too minute to escape the notice of the Master. He does not teach carelessness,—he encourages dependence. It would be an abuse of the spirit of the text to insist that missionaries in our own day should go forth exactly according to these literal instructions. When the church is rich, the missionary should not be made an example of poverty. When the church is poor, the missionary who has Christ's spirit in him will not be deterred by a prospect of hard endurance. The one vital question relates not to the outward circumstances, but to the spirit in which missionary work is undertaken.

11. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

(1) The servant should always carry in his heart the words of his Master. Those words are wanted in times of darkness and trial. The riches of Christ are spiritual. They are hidden in the heart. Ideas, promises, divine assurances, are better than weapons of war. (2) The servant can only be identified with the Master by spiritual sympathy. The servant must not only do the Master's work, he must do it in the Master's spirit, and for the Master's

sake. (3) The tremendous responsibility of those who have gospel proposals made to them. If they reject them, "it shall be more tolerable for Sodom," etc. This is founded upon reason. It must be more criminal to shut out midday than to exclude dawn—to reject the Son, than to neglect a prophet. (4) The solemn and awe-inspiring fact that all ages are to culminate in a day of judgment! Sodom, Capernaum, Egypt, England, shall confront each other at a common bar! "From them to whom much has been given," etc. (5) The infinite comfort to the good man of knowing from Christ's own lips that there is to be a day of judgment. He remits his cause to that day. He is relieved as to the vindication of character and service, and feels at liberty to do his holy work.

12. And they went out, and preached that men should repent.
13. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

Their work was divided into three parts: it was moral, intellectual, and physical.

(1) It was moral. They preached that men should repent. This was fundamental. The apostles addressed themselves to the heart. No ministry can be permanently useful and successful which proceeds upon a superficial estimate of human depravity. The ministry goes down in power when it modifies its demands for human repentance.

(2) It was intellectual. They cast out devils. They restored the use of reasoning faculties. Of course, this might include a great moral work, but not necessarily. To expel a devil is one thing, to bring men to repentance is another. Restored reason does not involve the sanctification of the heart. In our ministry we may quicken mental power, we may enrich our hearers with many profound or brilliant ideas, we may elevate their thinking, and secure their highest admiration, yet may not lead them to repentance before God.

(3) It was physical. "They anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." They never treated death as a blessing. They valued every form of life. Christ's whole gospel is constructive. Christianity is still the greatest of healing powers. Keep its laws, and you will walk in life, or if disease come upon

you there will come also such views of God, of eternity, and truth, as will deliver from the dominion of death. Atheistic suffering is one thing, Christian suffering is another. If it is hard to suffer in the friendless desert, where no kind voice can speak one word of hope, what of suffering in the wilderness of atheism, and dying under unbroken gloom?

Beautiful is the picture of men sent forth on such an errand. Observe, this is what Jesus Christ is daily doing,—seeking out men who warn, and teach, and heal. More: every man who feels that he is sent of Christ on this work will go to his Master for help, and rely upon his Master for success. Who sent me? What is his name? "I AM THAT I AM." It is enough! It is Omnipotence!

14. And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

King Herod is supposed to have been a Sadducee, and therefore to have discredited the doctrine of resurrection. Under the torment of conscience, however, he asserted the very doctrine which, as a speculator, he denied! Learn that creeds should rest upon a moral, rather than upon an exclusively intellectual basis. In the long run conscience will put down all other voices.

15. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.

These men represent the speculators of society. Conscience is hardly concerned in their case. They give themselves to the consideration of mere problems or puzzles. They represent, too, the persons who can talk about religious subjects without having any religious feeling. Religion is to them only a topic of the day. It is something to be remarked upon, and then dropped in favour of something else. There are men around ourselves who suppose that to admire a preacher is to admire Christ, and that to be critical about sermons is to be concerned about truth.

16. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

Here is the reply of conscience to the suggestion of fancy. Herod was not to be soothed by guess-work. There is a profound

truth here,—viz., that high moral excitement is beyond the control of merely intellectual skill. The gospel shows its divinity in the influence which it brings to bear upon the desires and sufferings of the self-accusing heart. Herod may be taken as the type of men who cannot be satisfied with fanciful theology or with flattering applications of partial truths. He wishes to get at realities, and to be faithful to himself, and to the facts which are around him. Earnest hearers make earnest preachers.

17. For Herod himself had sent forth, and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her.

18. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

19. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:

20. For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

21. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;

22. And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.

23. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.

24. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

25. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

26. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.

27. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,

28. And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother.

29. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

Man may be slain, but truth cannot be annihilated. John was buried, but the gospel was still making way in the world. It has been thought that Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great) was a Sadducee, and that this exclamation respecting Jesus testified in a remarkable manner to the power of conscience in relation to theological belief. The Sadducees denied the resur-

rection of the dead; yet conscience rebelled against the theory, and forced the superstitious tetrarch into this confession. Whether it be true or not that Herod was a Sadducee, it is certainly true that the moral nature does, on great occasions, clear its way through all fanciful theories and speculations, and become authoritative as the voice of God in the soul. Man overlays his spiritual constitution, so to speak, with creeds which flatter his vanity and give false peace to his conscience; but crises supervene which effect a moral resurrection, and give man to feel the discrepancy between the wants of his nature and the promises of false creeds. There is a great quickening and educational force in the exceptional circumstances of life. Crises make history. Man cannot tell what he is until some special event makes his soul quake with fear, or brings upon him the light of a great joy. As with individuals, so with nations; monotony would kill them; all enthusiasm would die out, and corruption would become universal. God has so arranged his government that monotony is broken up by startling events,—the thunderbolt, the pestilence, the mildew, come suddenly upon us,—death teaches life, and the grave calls to heaven. In all great crises, both in individual and national life, there is an instinctive movement of the soul towards God. The temporary creed is subordinated to the normal constitution; and it is most solemn to watch the soul in its resurrectional moods how impatient it is of mere speculation, and how anxious for positive doctrine and assurance. It then lives double life; with frightful energy it clears the field of false friends, and with startling rapidity passes over the chasms of the past, and brings up all the sins which have weakened and deformed itself. When Herod heard of the fame of Jesus a species of resurrection occurred. The night of Bacchanalian revel came back; the holy prophet's blood dripped upon the palace floor again; and the soul said, This Jesus is the man whom I murdered! There is, so to speak, a moral memory as well as a memory that is merely intellectual. Conscience writes in blood. She may brood in long silence, but she cannot forget. All the universe helps her recollection. Every leaf of the forest contains her indictments, and every voice of the air prompts her remembrance. The revel passed, the dancing demon-hearted daughter of Herodias went back to her

blood-thirsty mother, the lights were extinguished, and the palace relapsed into its accustomed order; but the prophet's blood cried with a cry not to be stifled, and angels with swords of fire watched the tetrarch night and day. All men are watched. The sheltering wing of the unseen angel is close to every one of us. The eye sees but an infinitesimal portion of what is around,—we are hemmed in with God! This great truth we forget; but exceptional circumstances transpire which for a moment rend the veil, and give us to see how public is our most secret life, how the angels hear the throb of the heart, and God counts the thoughts of the mind.

We see how behind all such feeling as Herod's there are explanatory circumstances. Such feeling can be accounted for. Learn how life comes back upon a man, giving current events unexpected and even tragical meanings, and forcing him to look steadily at himself. This doctrine has, of course, two bearings: goodness will come up, as well as wickedness. The paragraph should be homiletically treated in its unity; still, several verses may afterwards be taken separately. For example, the 17th verse may be taken as the basis of a discourse upon the forcible putting away of good influences. A man can refuse to hear any more preaching; he can commit the printed Bible to the flames: he can avoid every company in which the divine name is honoured: and many other things he may do through sheer force or by dogged obstinacy. But the greatest things lie far beyond the reach of mere force.

The 19th verse may show the impiety of social resentments: showing (1) That social defiance does not necessarily arise from social justice. (2) That it is fallacious to suppose that in all quarrels both sides are wrong. Herodias had a quarrel with John, yet Herodias alone was wrong, and John was the servant of God. (3) That in some quarrels there are the purposes of murder. Herodias would have killed John; in effect, therefore, she was guilty of murder. Her heart had slain him, though he was beyond the reach of her hand.

The 20th verse shows the good points in a bad character. (1) Herod feared John; had respect for his moral qualities. (2) Herod recognised the excellences of John; acknowledged him to be "a just man and an holy." (3) Herod was interested

in the ministry of John,—he heard him gladly. All this may be found where there is no saving grace in the heart, and in the case of Herod was found in connection with a most reproachable life! Caress a mad dog, because of its silken hair; pet a murderer, because of his taste in dress; but never call him a saint whose morality is but an outward decoration.

30. And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

31. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.

32. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

On the words "rest awhile," a sermon upon occasional rest might be founded. Look at the invitation (1) as given by Jesus Christ: he was careful even of men's physical energies; nothing escaped his attention; if we would trust him in physical and temporal matters he would do more for us. "Rest awhile" is a mother's gentle word; it is a sister's suggestion; it is most tenderly sympathetic. Look at the invitation (2) as relating to spiritual work. Great mistakes made about labour. Men may work without using their hands. Hardly any phrase is less correctly used than the expression "the working classes." Thought prostrates the thinker. Sympathy taxes every power. He who works with his hands has an easy life compared with him who works with his brain. He who gives ideas gives life. Look at the invitation (3) as limited as to time; rest awhile. It is not, Give up the work; abandon it in disgust; leave it to others; it is rest awhile. Rest should be a preparation for service. There is morality even in resting. Conscience should have something to do with holidays. It may be right to rest one hour, it may be immoral to rest two. There is morality in sleeping, in recreation, in all things.

33. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.

34. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

The great considerations which determine the conduct of Jesus Christ: (1) Earnestness on the part of people: they ran; they

outwent the evangelistic company. When Jesus sees faith he never fails to reward it. (2) Destitution,—"because they were as sheep not having a shepherd." Jesus proceeded upon the principle that men could not live without instruction. A shepherd is needed in all human societies. Men must be organised, taught, disciplined. There are men divinely qualified to interpret truth; they have insight, sympathy, and faculty of delicate and forcible expression. There are other men who can only receive what is given to them by God's ministry. They are as sheep, they need a shepherd. Curious things are occasionally done by the human flock: the sheep think themselves quite as good as the shepherd; the sheep often tell the shepherd that they are tired of him,—and sometimes they break his heart!

35. And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:

36. Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

37. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?

38. He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

39. And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

40. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties.

41. And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

42. And they did all eat, and were filled.

43. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

44. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

Jesus Christ calls upon his followers not only to discover social wants, but also to relieve them. Imagine the disciples coming to Jesus to suggest something in the way of compassion! The disciples were exceedingly quick in finding out that the day was waning, and that the place was not favourable to hospitality; but it never occurred to them that they themselves ought to feed the multitude. Some men are remarkably sharp in finding out difficulties, and pointing to external circumstances; yet they never

dream that instead of merely indicating the want, they ought to supply it. They gave very cheap and easy advice to the Master; with sparkling neatness they said to him, "Send the multitude away." As if they cared more for the multitude than Jesus did! There are many excellent statisticians in the Church; men who can strike averages, and add up three columns of figures at a time, and show the multitude how to get away. Such men may, by a condescending and inscrutable Providence, be made some use of in the world; but from a human point of view it is not easy to clear up the mystery of their birth. Let it be carefully observed that the disciples were called by Jesus to do what may be described as a secular work. They were told to give the people bread. This work they undertook at Christ's bidding. Here is a great lesson. The Church does even its outside work, its physical and philanthropic service, immediately under Jesus Christ's hand. The holy Master orders every department of the household. We keep the Church door, because we are appointed thereunto by the Master himself. The preacher and the distributor of bread are both Christ's servants. The Church is called upon to deal with all questions which affect the wellbeing of society: with education, with pauperism, with emigration, with sanitary arrangements, with amusements; in short, with everything that is needful for the healthy development of human life. Some men have an extraordinary way of dividing and distributing themselves. For example, they go to church as religious men, they go to the town council merely as citizens, they go to the school-board simply as educationalists; when they buy and sell, they have no Christian creed. When they sit at the board of health, they think it irreverent to name the name of Christ; and as for opening the meeting of the town council with prayer, they would think him a madman who proposed anything so monstrous. Yet these very men are most pious on Sunday, and severely critical in estimating the theological soundness of their respective pastors. When we are filled with Christ's spirit, we shall do everything in his name, and for his sake; the state will be swallowed up in the Church, and the secular will be glorified by the spiritual.

It should be pointed out that the poorest resources, when religiously used, are more than sufficient to meet all demands.

Look at the resources,—five loaves and two fishes! Look at the demand,—five thousand men! Look at the result,—"they did all eat, and were filled." Use what you have, and it will grow. Use it religiously, and it will be more than sufficient: this doctrine applies to mind, to strength, to time. You have more mind than you supposed. Use it, and you will be surprised how it answers your appeal. Your strength will go much further than it has yet gone. "Put on thy strength." Call thyself up to the highest point of power. Most of us are living within our strength. We are afraid of exhausting ourselves, forgetting that in Christ's service exhaustion is re-creation. As for time, make it! Sleep less, eat less, talk less, and you will find time enough. Observe particularly—for this is the vital point of the argument—that all our resources are to be used religiously—"looking up to heaven, he blessed and brake." No man loses by the heavenward looks of his life. Some men say they have not time to pray. Nor have they time to die,—but they must find it.

The Church ought to be the one inclusive society—the sanctuary, the school, the hospital, the reformatory, the home of the whole world. "They need not go away: give ye them,"—that is the appeal of Christ to the Church.

45. And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.
46. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

When he had worked, he prayed! If the Master prayed, can the servant do without prayer? Whilst yet upon earth, Jesus Christ prayed for others,—his intercession was not reserved for heaven. In this case, however, it is permissible to suppose that he prayed specially and exclusively for himself. We know from other sources that he did actually make his own circumstances the subject of repeated and most agonising prayer. All that he had done up to this time was indicative of the great thing which was yet to be done. It was in Christ's heart to bring to the maturity of the Cross all the germs of love and sacrifice which were present in his daily ministry. Have we not had experience of some such feeling as this: We have fed a multitude; it is enough; we may now be satisfied; our work is finished;—and so our life has been in danger of falling short of a higher purpose?

A man may do many great works, and yet never do the greatest: he may feed a multitude, yet never go to Gethsemane: he may suffer many to touch him, and yet at last may shun the Cross! So after every great work we should hasten to a mountain to pray,—that our ideal may be kept steadily and clearly before us, and that our main work should not be evaded through our incidental service, however beautiful and useful that service may be.

47. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

48. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

49. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

50. For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

51. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

The subject may be regarded as showing the relation of Jesus Christ to the Church. (1) That relation sometimes appears to be very distant. In this case, for example, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and Jesus Christ was alone upon the land There have been times when the Church has apparently drifted away from Christ; there are also times when the alienation seems to have begun on the part of Christ. Is the separation real or is it merely apparent? (2) That relation often discovers itself most substantially and pathetically under circumstances of trial and sorrow. See how this is proved in the incident: the circumstances were loneliness, danger, helplessness.

From this incident three things are clear: (1) That Christ himself may not be known by the Church; (2) that some fears which distress the Church are not altogether unfounded; (3) that a recovered sense of the presence of Christ brings with it complete and enduring calm and joy.

The incident may be regarded as showing some differences between Jesus Christ and his followers: (1) He was master of events; they were slaves of circumstances. (2) He was ever calm; they were often filled with fear. (3) He saw the whole of every case; they saw but part of it. (4) He had power to approach them; they had no power to move towards him.

52. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

The miracles are to be considered in their connection and unity. The miracles are to have a cumulative value; as also are providences. Life is thus to help life; yesterday is to be the hope and defence of the heart in relation to to-morrow. The unity of the divine power is to be realised by the believer; it is one with God whether he quiet a storm or feed a multitude, heal the sick or raise the dead. In proportion as we realise this, we are delivered from the tyranny of mere circumstances or appearances; we live under the dominion of the divine, not under the fear of the external and transient.

The uselessness of miracles as moral agents is painfully demonstrated by this circumstance: "For their heart was hardened." If any miracle could have softened the heart, a miracle of this particular nature would have done so; it was the expression of a compassionate feeling on the part of Christ, as well as a display of supreme power; yet it was immediately forgotten, and the selfishness of human nature re-asserted itself. Some aspects of the divine nature can only be truly seen through the heart. We degrade life by making it into a merely intellectual puzzle; it is elevated when regarded as a development of the moral nature.

53. And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

54. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,

55. And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

56. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

A repetition of an old fact. Men work in many cases from the lower to the higher; in many cases, indeed, they satisfy themselves with the lower only. The people in this instance were deeply concerned about their physical condition, but not one sign of concern about their spiritual relations did they exhibit. Jesus Christ might have made this circumstance a basis for the keenest and justest reproach. In addressing his own disciples, he constantly urged them not to think about the body, or meat, or

raiment; all these things he treated with comparative indifference or contempt; yet in the instance of those who were not his disciples he was graciously willing to meet them on their own terms, and to do as much for their bodily welfare as if they had no souls. His great object was to lay hold upon the moral attention of the world. In some cases the proposition of Christian doctrine would have been a waste of energy and of time; in such cases Jesus Christ began with the physical condition and necessities of those who were around him, and so sought to quicken the ear of the heart to receive the doctrines which heal and bless the soul. The lesson to the Church is clear. The Church must begin wherever an opportunity is offered; it may be in relieving the necessitous, in giving education to the ignorant, in seeking the social improvement of the masses; Christ's injunction to the Church is, "Begin somewhere." From his own example we are to learn that the physical is but to be introductory to the spiritual; because to heal the body without seeking to relieve the soul is actually to aggravate the sinfulness of sin by giving the sinner a new lease of power in his evil way. The idea that the shadow of Christ passing over the sick would heal them is suggestive of the fact that there is no waste of power in the ministry of Jesus Christ. A look broke Peter's heart. A touch of the hem of his garment healed a poor woman. His shadow passing over the sick cooled the fevered and gave rest to weariness;—truly the shadow of the Saviour is better than the lustre of all suns!

The action of the people is most suggestive: they seized the opportunity of Christ's presence to secure the blessings which they most desired. "Now is the accepted time," etc. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." The people were not excited about Christ's coming after he had been in the country; they were excited at the very time of his presence, knowing that if they neglected the critical hour the opportunity might never recur. The argument is this: If men were so anxious promptly to seize a physical advantage, how intense should be their urgency in seeking the higher blessings of moral and intellectual redemption and sanctification?

Chapter vi. 1-6.

1. And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2. And when the Sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

4. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

CHRIST CONTEMNED.

IT was not a ministry that elicited cordial response. Sometimes the teacher has to work with a conscious reluctance which disables him. There is a sense of weariness in the whole tone of this paragraph; it is discoverable even in the attitude and action of the Son of God. This, said he, is the synagogue, and this is the Sabbath day, and this is the sacred roll, historical, prophetical, poetical; but these people do not want to hear me. I know it by their countenances; every eye blinks with suspicion, every man is waiting for my halting; here I have to encounter a tremendous resistance of soul. Sometimes the teacher could encounter open hostility, and become eloquent under the pungent attack; but what can he do with the cold heart? what can any man do in the presence of indifference? Oppose the gospel, and the gospel will find its own replies: challenge it to combat, and its sword will flash out in the light instantly, and never be put back until the victory has been determined; but what could even the Son of God do with simple suspicion, unexpressed and unavowed dislike, prejudice, and distrust? Had there been open

detestation the case would have been better. You can answer detestation, you cannot reply to prejudice; you do not know where it is, where it originates, how it develops, what colour it assumes, and what subtle courses it pursues in the whole intricacy of the human mind and heart. We have seen Jesus Christ in the presence of hostile throngs, but to see him in the presence of his own countrymen, and, so to say, townsmen and fellow-villagers, and to see him encountered by simple blank suspicion, is a new view of this Man, whose ministry comprehended every aspect and every necessity of human nature.

Yet it was difficult to repress opinion. The people said among themselves, "From whence hath this man these things?" He has no right to them; this wine ought not to have been in this goblet; the water is good, but how rough the vessel: could we not have had this same water in fine porcelain? It would have tasted better in a pure crystal; we do not like this man's way of giving it: we cannot deny what he says; he is wise, shrewd, penetrating; an able man, wonderful, striking, unique: but how is it that he can do these mighty works? He was never trained in this direction; he lacks the guinea-stamp of the schools; he has not been ordained by rabbi or learned man or authentic authority of any kind; there are the miracles, but how did he come to work them? If some high priest or scribe had worked these miracles we would have applauded them, the balance of things would have been equal; but how can the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda and Simon do these things?—They, like many others, started the argument from the wrong end. They should have said: Seeing the works are so excellent, the worker himself must be good. If we would adopt that standard of reasoning, what prejudice would be dispelled, what new charities would be opened up and exercised and come to noble fruition! Let us say so with regard to sects, communions, denominations: why say, These people are rough, therefore they can do no beautiful thing? Why not say, contrariwise, The thing done is beautiful, therefore, under the rough exterior there must be some hidden, latent, divinely-originated loveliness? That would be right, that would be just; the spirit of charity would make such a criticism noble. We are apt to think that because the instruments are rude, therefore

what the instruments are seeking to express must be rude also. That is false in reasoning, and it is unjust in morality: what is the thing being taught, what is the thing being done, what is the doctrine being declared, what are the results of the pursuit and the declaration? If men are made honest, sober, wise, honourable, if they are proved to be worthy of trust and all the honours of citizenship, the thing itself which has wrought out this issue must be credited with divinity, must be regarded as an aspiration. It must be a very difficult thing for persons who have known the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda and Simon, to believe anything that he says. Did Jesus resent this? When did he resent anything? He was the Son of man, he understood contempt, he knew the evil genius of suspicion. "They were offended at him," but he held himself ready to do mighty works on their account if by faith they would allow him to show his omnipotence. This seems to be the attitude of all good men towards suspicious and suspecting persons. Whatever others do, be sure you always act the gentleman. Poor men can do so; men who have had no advantages of a social, academic, or other kind, can by meekness and pureness of soul, sweetness and simplicity of disposition, be real aristocrats, gentlemen, knights. Whenever persons, therefore, mock you, or indulge and use mischievously prejudice against you, always show that you vindicate your position, not by your resentment, but by your gentleness, forbearance, magnanimity. Say, in sweet Christian monologue, They would not do so if they knew better; probably they only see me from an exterior point of view; they do not understand all my purpose, they only hear part of what I say, and they listen with too much credulity to what others say about me, and especially against me; perhaps if they knew me better they would not be resentful, prejudiced, unkind, hostile, and unamiable. That is the speech for a Christian to make; it is hard to compose, it is all but impossible to deliver; but even this miracle lies within the almightiness of the Holy Ghost, God the Holy Spirit. Let us ask him to make us gracious when others are ungracious, magnanimous when others are supercilious and petulant and unjust; and let us ask God to show us that there is after all no argument equal to a character. Silence may be a miracle; a closed mouth in the

presence of evil imputation may be the best exculpation: "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth": what if that silence were the consummation and expression of his omnipotence?

There is great comfort to be derived from the incident narrated by the evangelist. One would say, given a preacher, wise, gracious, sympathetic, lovely in personal character, and unquestionably supreme in ability, and known to be ineffably tender in disposition, and the people must recognise him, welcome him, believe what he says, and repronounce in action the doctrine of his lips. That theory is dissolved and annihilated by this incident. It was the Son of God that was contemned, disbelieved, rejected. We hear even upon platforms that where the gospel is faithfully presented the people are hungering and thirsting for it, and are prepared to respond to its appeals, and invitations, and challenges. That was not the case with Jesus Christ. He was the Gospel, yet he was called Beelzebub; he was the Son of God, and was stoned for making the claim; there was no guile in his soul, there was no blackness of iniquity upon his sweet sacred lips; the people wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, and their wonder never rose into religion, trust, and praise. Let faithful men, therefore, be not too much discouraged. The reason of failure is not in you, necessarily; there is room enough for self-inquest, piercing examination of the heart, trying of the reins and thoughts and motives and purposes; you may hold continual self-assize; but the Son of God was despised and rejected of men; we hid, as it were, our faces from him; we spat upon his face, and plucked the hair from his cheeks. Say not, therefore, that if you had ideal beauty and loveliness and moral charm you would fall down in an attitude of piety, and accept the revelation as the very incarnation of God. History contradicts you, consciousness ought to restrain such an ebullition of impious pretension; we ought to know ourselves enough to know that men can go from temples to cesspools, can go from the altar where the blood of the Sacrament is drunk, and drink deeply out of the cup of devils. Human nature can do miracles of this kind. We ought

by this time to be acquainted with the fact that impossibility is one of the easiest exercises we have ever to accomplish.

Jesus, like himself, generalised upon the incident; he said, "A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." He did not say, I am suffering from a thorn that never pierced any other man; I am the victim of an unusual and unprecedented suspicion: he simply allied himself by sympathetic union with the great lines of history and said, Nothing has happened to me that is uncommon; this is but a repetition of the beginning, the very genesis of history is in this conduct. "A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house"—because people will not look further than locality, visible characteristic, and limited uniqueness of speciality, infirmity, or other trait of disposition and relationship. Men will not listen to the music, they will handle the instrument; we have nothing to do with the organ, we have everything to do with the music. Not where Jesus came from but what he has to say should be our supreme inquiry: not the Nazarene but the Son of man can touch every point in the circumference of human relationship and human need. Judge every man by this standard; judge every Christian communion by this standard. If sects that you dislike are doing good, acknowledge it, and say, After all, there is something better in these people than I thought there was; I was wrong; by the fruit the tree shall be judged; good fruit never grew on bad trees: this fruit is sweet, therefore the tree cannot be bad. When we reason thus, I repeat, we shall get back to simplicity, trustfulness, charity, co-operation, and that wondrous exercise of mutual honour which results in mutual provocation to love and good works.

He was ready to do mighty works, but they would not allow him. You cannot drive the engine unless you light the fire. Many men have fuel enough. You have seen a grate full of fuel; was it a fire? Why do not you put your hands down to that grate and warm them? It is a grate. Your answer is simple, direct, and sufficient. The grate is there, the fuel is there; but where is the spark, the fire? So Jesus Christ

himself was prepared to do many mighty works there, but there was no faith-spark, no love-fire, no answering heart, no cry that made him who heard it feel that the urgency of human need was pleading with his all-sufficiency. It is right to fix the blame properly. If men are not saved, it is their own blame. Never can I believe that God has said to any man, I will not save you; I have made up my mind that you are not to be saved. God never said such words or thought such thoughts. He is the God and Father of us all: God so loved the world; Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost. If any man is not lost Christ had no mission to him; if a man can stand before Christ and say, I am perfectly well in body, soul, and spirit, Christ says, Then I came not to you, for you have no need of a physician. But first let the man be found. Jesus Christ does not retire from this sphere, saying, I could have done mighty works there, but I would not; he says in effect, I wanted to do mighty works, but the people would not allow me to do so because of their unbelief.

"He laid his hands upon a few sick folk"; they are always ready to take what they can get; they are always prepared to follow the suggestion and urgency of conscious pain and need. Jesus Christ was always welcomed to the sick-chamber after all other doctors had left; Jesus was never called first; after all the visitors had gone downstairs, saying, There is no hope, it is a case of dissolution, then they sent for the Son of God: a tribute, but not intended; a compliment, but not so expressed. Let us lay it down as a doctrine that may sober the mind and constrain the heart in right directions, that where men are not conscious of mighty works on the part of God, the reason is in their own unbelief. If we had believed more we should have enjoyed more; if our faith had been greater, then had our grace been larger and richer. Lord, increase our faith.

Now Jesus goes away. "He marvelled because of their unbelief." They marvelled at his mighty works; he marvelled at their want of faith. Why do not these people see that life is faith, and that faith is life, and that without faith life is a mockery, a transient dream? Why do they not comprehend the sublime

philosophy which says that faith creates the universe and enjoys it? Faith builds new heavens, rolls new earths into place covered with summer and harvest, and faith enjoys as of right the creations of its splendid energy. Let us abide in the confidence of this doctrine. This will do more for us than any theory, suggestion, or possession of man. We cannot explain it; if we could explain it, it would be but a geometrical figure. Astronomy is never satisfied; it has its glasses, and it looks on the surface, but it says in its palpitating, discontented, resurgent heart, The worlds are beyond; these are outposts, spirit lamps: I want to be millions upon millions of miles beyond: all that height is crowded with stars, and this mean glass, this horrible mockery of optics, could only see a speck here and a speck there: and my astronomic record, what is it but an account of a phase of the moon, a throb in a cloud that means that there is another star there, pulsing, beating, waiting to be detected, weighed, measured, watched with astronomic reverence. Yet if we say the same theologically we are fanatics, enthusiasts, poor addle-brained little creatures. That is not so. Faith says, What you see is very little; that is the outside of the cloud; it is beautiful, but—but—but—— And in that sublime hope we endure all things; we purify ourselves.

Chapter vii.

THE REBUKES OF CHRIST.

[An Analysis.]

1. Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes which came from Jerusalem.

2. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault.

3. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

4. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

5. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

6. He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

7. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

8. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

9. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

10. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

11. But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.

12. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

13. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

THIS paragraph shows Christ's method of rebuking. The paragraph which immediately succeeds shows Christ's method of instructing. The paragraphs may be taken together in a discourse upon the outward and inward relations of Jesus Christ: his relations to the Pharisees and the general body of

the people, and his more secret and spiritual relations to his disciples.

In the case of the Pharisees, there was (1) something right; (2) something incomplete; (3) something wrong. Let this be shown :—

(1) There was something right. The Pharisees noticed that a few plain men who had no right, so far as their social standing was concerned, to lead the fashion or custom of society, had treated with neglect, perhaps with contempt, a well-established custom. Men who introduce new eras, or teach revolutionary ideas, or set aside the traditions of the elders, have no claim to exemption from rigorous questioning. Social life should be more than a mere collection of personal fancies. There should be law and discipline in social habit. There is a line up to which personal independence should be claimed: beyond that line men should consider one another, and maintain a common order. In this case, the traditional discipline had been set aside, and the question, Why? is a proper one. We should make inquiries about each other, and show a religious concern about each other's habits.

(2) There was something incomplete. Ceremonialism is always incomplete. It is impossible that ritual can be final, because the moral must exceed the formal. The discipline of "the Pharisees and all the Jews" was no easy matter after all. Do we sufficiently consider that the men whom we hold in contempt put themselves to far greater trouble in maintaining their religious duties and scruples than we do? Beware, lest contempt be mistaken for spirituality! This frequent washing of hands, this abstinence from meat until the hands had been washed, this washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels and tables, this tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, when put together, show that the religious habits of the Pharisees were such as required time, patience, and constancy, and not a little self-denial. We have escaped the trouble; have we within us the spirit of consecration of which all outward habits should be the sign? Are we satisfied with mere sentiment, or do we endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ?

(3) There was something wrong. They rejected the commandment of God, that they might keep their own tradition; they

taught for doctrines the commandments of men; they honoured God with their lips, but their heart was far from him. Before God, life is not a question of washed hands, but of a washed heart; it is not a question of kneeling, but of praying. Religion may be a mere civility towards God,—a courteous acknowledgment of his existence, and nothing more!

In rebuking the inquirers Jesus Christ seized upon their moral defects, and showed them that God pierced the heart. His tone was spiritual. He set up no technical argument about forms and ceremonies; he held the infinite light of divine righteousness over the secret corruption of the heart.

The point to be specially observed is, that a right spirit will make to itself right forms, and that it is no sign of heavenly-mindedness to sneer at Christian formalities. Public worship, open profession of Christ, family devotion, Christian services, may express the sanctity and love of the heart as before God.

14. And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:

15. There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

16. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

17. And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

18. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;

19. Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

20. And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

21. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22. Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

The doctrine was stated in the hearing of all the people: the explanation was given to the disciples alone. Truth is not always self-explanatory. We need the living teacher as well as the divine truth.

Amongst the lessons taught by this figure may be mentioned—(1) That men are corrupted by such outward things only as

touch some corresponding quality in their own nature. Some men can make money without becoming covetous. Some men can dress handsomely without becoming vain. Some men can enjoy amusements without becoming frivolous. Other men, differently constituted, have to watch themselves in all these particulars as they would watch gunpowder. Hence the folly and injustice of judging one another!

(2) That words and actions reveal the true spiritual quality of the speaker and actor. "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man." There is a common saying that no man can injure a man but himself. It is not wholly true, yet largely so. Not what is said about a man, but what the man himself says, is the true standard.—(*a*) This doctrine destroys the excuse that circumstances are blamable for our moral defilement.—(*b*) This doctrine determines the bounds of social judgment. For example, you accuse a man of having attended a certain questionable class of amusements; now observe, the amusements may have done the man no harm, but the censoriousness of your spirit may have defiled you! Or, again: you suppose that because a man is prosperous he must of necessity be worldly-minded; now, the prosperity may have left him unspoiled, but the criticism may show you to be envious, ignoble, and spiteful, though it may have been offered with a pious sigh!

The 21st and 22nd verses give a picture of the human heart as presented by Jesus Christ.

Looking at this graphic, but most terrible and humiliating picture, four things are clear:—

(1) That the heart is chargeable with foulest apostasy. Compare this picture with the heart as it came from God. "Let us make man in our image," etc. "God hath made man upright," etc. What forces are in man! What fury,—what malevolence!

(2) That this apostasy shows itself in many ways. Read the black list! No one man may reveal his corruptness in the whole of these ways. A man may never commit "adultery," yet his mind may be full of "evil thoughts": he may resent the charge of having committed "thefts," yet he may be degraded by the spirit of "covetousness": he may shudder at the thought of "murder," yet he may be mad with "pride." We are all somewhere in this list of devils!

(3) That such apostasy has no power of self-recovery. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." In a case so desperate the help must come from the outside.

(4) That the nature and scope of the apostasy includes the whole race in one condemnation. "There is none righteous." "All we like sheep have gone astray," etc. "Where is boasting?" "Let him that thinketh he standeth," etc.

Spiritual diseases require spiritual remedies. It is not thine hand, O man, but thine heart of hearts that is wrong! "Though thou wash thee with nitre and take much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord." The day of heart-trying is at hand. "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

24. And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.

25. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

26. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

27. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

28. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

29. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

30. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

(1) Some things which are evil in themselves may be the occasion of good. The unclean spirit was the occasion of this mother hearing of Jesus Christ! But for the unclean spirit her interest in the great stranger might never have been awakened. So with all bad, unfortunate, painful things, they should lead to Christ. Affliction, loss, weakness, etc. On the other hand, whoever has heard of Christ should publish him to those who have never heard of him.

(2) The mere hearing of Jesus Christ may be without profit to the hearer. This woman not only heard of Christ, "she came

and fell at his feet, and besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter." Remark upon the tremendous responsibility of forming part of a Christian congregation, and yet not going to Christ. Does hearing of water quench thirst? Does hearing of medicine heal disease? Show that men should be as sensible in religious questions as in ordinary affairs.

(3) The prayer of the heart never fails. Its particular object may often be denied, but the heart itself is comforted and quieted by divine ministries. In this incident the heart does two things: (*a*) it shows the superiority of the human over the national; (*b*) it excites intellectual energy,—how sublime the reply of the woman! The mind is strongest and brightest when under the dominion of the heart. Sorrow makes the poorest lips eloquent. Under such circumstances the pleading mother might have (*a*) pronounced herself insulted; (*b*) resented the terms in which she and her child were described; (*c*) denounced the inability of Christ to meet a case so desperate as hers. She did none of these things. She shot back Christ's own arrow from the bow of her heart.

The whole incident gives, first, a lesson to mothers,—pray for your children; second, an encouragement to intercessors,—urge upon God the desires of the inmost heart; third, a sublime view of divine sufficiency,—the crumbs of God's table are better than the luxuries of all other tables; the poorest, dimmest conceptions of Christian truth are more to be prized than the fullest revelations of truth that are merely introductory or subordinate; fourth, a hint as to the limitation of the highest services,—the child was healed apart from any action of her own: the mother plucked this fruit of the highest branch, and gave it to her little daughter. There is a time when the child's own will may set itself against God. The child becomes more than a child. Whilst children are wholly yours, beseech God much in their behalf.

31. And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

32. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

33. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;

34. And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

35. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

36. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;

37. And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

(1) Christ sighed,—his view of human nature touched his heart. (*a*) His natural sensibilities were touched by human suffering, and therefore he was a man of like passions with ourselves; (*b*) his sympathies ever responded to the necessities of human life, and therefore he had all the human qualifications needful for a Saviour of men.

(2) Christ looked up to heaven. He connected the divine with the human: he showed the unity of the great system of which what we see is but a part: he made even his physical work a spiritual exercise.

(3) Christ said, Be opened. He spoke authoritatively; the weakness of the sigh became changed into the strength of royalty.

See how these exercises follow each other in something more than a merely logical order. What an appeal to the minister of Christ! (1) Canst thou do any great work in the world without sighing? without tender sympathy? without having thy very heart pierced with sorrow for human sin and pain? (2) Canst thou work without looking heavenward? Is the battle there? Dost thou not need to bring down God to thy side? O man, self-trusting, thou hast failed in thy ministry, because in the midst of work no time was found for an upward glance,—for the look which is prayer. (3) Hast thou spoken feebly, hesitatingly, apologetically? Dost thou speak the word as if begging pardon for an intrusion? Or, with clearness, power and authority? How?

The 37th verse shows what the whole world will say when Christ's mediation is completed.

Chapter viii.

FEEDING THE FOUR THOUSAND.

[An Analysis.]

1. In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

2. I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:

3. And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.

4. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?

5. And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven.

6. And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.

7. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.

8. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.

9. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

HERE we have a special exemplification of the philanthropic spirit of Christ. In Christ, philanthropy was not a sentiment but a controlling power, not a dream but a fact. Some of the more striking suggestions of this paragraph are these: (1) Two different methods of dealing with social problems,—"send the multitude away;" that is one method,—"give ye them to eat;" that is another. We often have the remedy at hand while we fruitlessly seek it afar off. No man knows the range of his resources. This applies to mind, money, influence,—to all the aspects of life. A man's resources, looked at from the outside, may be as a grain of mustard seed; but planted, used, put into right conditions, etc. The disciples took an insufficient

view of their resources,—taking the account from the various evangelists, they said, "We have five loaves, we have but five loaves, we have but five barley loaves; we have but two fishes, we have but two small fishes." Lower and lower they sink in their representation of their resources,—a picture of men who have no faith. The life that is in a man multiplies the resources that are outside. (2) The entire fulness of Christ in relation to all human need. He said, "Bring them hither to me." Christ cared for the bodies of men; and his religion can never be unmindful of social, secular, commercial, and physical questions. The whole man came originally from God, and to the end of time the whole man must be profoundly interesting to God. All our resources must be taken to Christ if we would make them truly availing to the necessities of men. We hardly yet understand Christ's relation to material questions. "Let the people praise thee. . . . Then shall the earth yield her increase." Man loses no bread by praying over it. The principle may be extended—no life spent in true devotion is wasted. If Christ "looked up to heaven" while using the things of earth, shall we use the things of earth as though there were no heaven? (3) The compatibility of carefulness with the greatest bounty,—"They took up of the broken meat that remained seven baskets full." God will not suffer loss. He makes use of every sunbeam now that fell upon the first morning of time, and the dew which glittered in Eden sparkles in the rainbow of to-day. God is the most exacting of economists.

Among the miscellaneous remarks suggested by this paragraph may be named:—(1) Christ's power in all the wildernesses of time. (2) The impossibility of loneliness or want in fellowship with Christ. (3) The union of religious exercises with daily engagements. (4) The Giver of earthly bread is also the Giver of heavenly bread. (5) The man who is prepared to give himself is prepared to give all lower property.

There need not be any difficulty in receiving this statement. If a man will closely examine himself he will find that in his own life there have been interpositions and deliverances, unexpected and thrilling manifestations of bounty which verify this narrative, and show that in every life the miraculous element is most positive and influential.

Look at the incident (1) As showing that trials may arise through following Christ. The multitude had nothing to eat! Whatever the motive of the outsiders for following Christ, they did follow him, and in following him they were exposed to inconvenience and trial. There is no trial now in following the Saviour. Show the pitifulness and absurdity of modern whining in this matter of suffering. Following Christ is now the most successful habit of society, outside following, not vital, spiritual, self-sacrificial following.

Look at the incident (2) As showing how the impossible may become the possible. From the standpoint of the disciples, etc. From the standpoint of Christ, etc. We should always have a view of our own, but should not always act upon it. Our own view should show us the vastness and solemnity of life; should show us also our personal incompetence to meet its great necessities. Looking at these two things we shall be humbled,—humbled even to the point of despair. On the other hand, we should act on the view of Christ. We must connect ourselves with the supernatural, if we would really have dominion over all the wants and tumults of human life. God's views are to be carried out in God's strength. Now and again God sets us to do some great thing which startles us: it is so much out of proportion to our resources: we think God must have made a mistake! We often find ourselves uttering the tone of surprise in looking at unexpected demands upon our strength. This really does us good. It is well for a man to be startled out of himself, to be taken to the very limit of the possible, and to be told by God to throw himself over into the impossible. It was so, practically, in this case. Hear the startling word,—Feed four thousand people with seven loaves and a few small fishes! This kind of demand in life does us good because it leads us to cast ourselves entirely upon the Infinite. Sometimes it is said by men in the kingdom of Christ, who have to deal with great and difficult questions,—"We are bound to look at these things as business men:" in a very superficial sense this may be true, but as a rule of Christian enterprise it is a profound and most mischievous fallacy. The disciples looked at this question as business men! What was it that the disciples forgot? God! So with ourselves: we persist in ignoring the divine element.

Look at the incident (3) As showing how much superior is the man of ideas to the man of loaves. The man of loaves said, "It cannot be done;" the man of ideas said, "It must be done!" See how a man may be dwarfed by the material! The soul perishes in the absence of spiritual aspiration and communion. Don't live in your business, live beyond it, and descend upon it from the highest spiritual elevation. Loaves are for one world; ideas are for the universe. Of necessity the material must limit the power and hope of its believers: on the other hand, the spiritual ever lures the mind to enterprises higher and higher. This holds good of purely intellectual energy, how much more of energy that is religious as well as intellectual!

Look at the incident (4) As showing that the spiritual vindicates itself from the charge of wastefulness. With such power to multiply loaves, why be so careful about fragments? The one is the counterpart of the other. The spiritual is not the waste, but the accumulation of power. The crumbs of one meal should be the germs of another. The most liberal was also the most economical. In the universe there is nothing wasted, though the bounty be so liberal, and the feast so long-continued.

10. And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

11. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

12. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

13. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

The multitude did not ask for a sign, yet one was given: the Pharisees specially desired a sign, and no sign was granted. Mere curiosity should never be gratified by the Christian interpreter. There is no real necessity in human life which will be left unsupplied by the Saviour,—when an apparent want is not supplied by him, we may be assured that the want was apparent only, and by no means real. The text may be taken as the basis of a discourse upon the refusals of Christ. We often speak of what he gave: we might speak also of what he withheld. The words of the Old Testament are applicable to Jesus Christ. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

The refusals of Jesus Christ were governed by three considerations: (1) Religious curiosity is not to be mistaken for religious necessity; (2) Religious confidence is not to be won by irreligious ostentation; (3) Religious appeals are not to be addressed to the eye, but to the heart. In applying, these points show what Christ gave in comparison with what Christ refused. He gave bread, sight, hearing, speech, health; he gave his life, yet he refused a sign!

Understand that in some cases not to give a sign is in reality to give the most solemn and dreadful of all signs!

14. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

15. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

16. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.

17. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?

18. Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

19. When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.

20. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.

21. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

Christ gave the practical application of the refusal. This "beware" must be taken as the utterance aloud of the result of an unspoken process of reasoning. The address suggests three things: (1) That Christian thinking is to be conducted cautiously. Do not receive every suggestion that is offered. There is an enemy,—beware of him! (2) That Christian thinking is not to be perverted by great names. The Pharisees and Herod! Socially, these were amongst the greatest names of the day. There are many great names now, such as priests, editors, leaders, etc. Look at the speech, not merely at the speaker. Doctrine, before men. (3) That Christian thinking is not to be degraded by liberalism and materialism. "It is because we have no bread." This was paltry. Some men's thinking is always downwards. They cannot understand figures of speech. Preachers should be careful, in condescension to general ignorance and

occasional imbecility, to explain that when they say leaven they do not mean bread. It is most humiliating to give such explanations, but the Master gave them!

The 21st verse supplies a basis for a discourse upon the reproofs of Jesus Christ. There are reproofs which proceed (1) upon our forgetfulness of providences,—verses 19, 20; (2) upon our bondage to the mere letter,—leaven being mistaken for bread; (3) upon our abuse or non-use of faculties,—"having eyes, see ye not? having ears, hear ye not?" There should be some difference between the eye of a beast and the eye of a man.

22. And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

23. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.

24. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

25. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

26. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

This paragraph may be regarded as showing three views of Christ's work. (1) Christ's work as a salvation. The restoring of sight was a point on the brilliant line, the end of which was the salvation of mankind; so was every miracle of healing. (2) Christ's work as a process: the good work was not accomplished in this case, as in others, by a word,—it was done gradually. It is so in spiritual enlightenment. All good men do not see God with equal quickness or equal clearness. (3) Christ's work as a consummation: "He was restored, and saw every man clearly." He will not leave his work until it be finished; if so be men beseech him to go on to be gracious.

It has been to some readers an occasion of surprise that Jesus Christ should not instantaneously have cured the blind man. We should, indeed, rejoice in the variety of Christ's methods of working. His every method, to say nothing of his purpose, is full of mercy. His method is adapted to the cases which it treats. Some men could not bear instantaneousness. How many men have been ruined by sudden prosperity? Think, too, how obvious and manifold are the advantages of processes: how man is taught: how possibilities are revealed: how sympathy is

excited: how dependence is encouraged: how patience is sanctified. It should, further, be understood that as a matter of fact instantaneousness is the exception, and not the rule of divine procedure: if, therefore, there is to be any surprise, it should be at the suddenness, and not at the slowness of Christ's physical ministry.

27. And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Cæsarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

28. And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

29. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

30. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

Another instance of a process as in opposition to a sudden result. The method of the inquiry, too, is a process: first, what do men say, and secondly, what do you say? The conversation may be taken in three points of view:—

(1) Jesus Christ, the subject of universal inquiry. All men talk about him: he appears to all by the variety of his works and by the vitality of his teaching: as the Son of man he appeals to all men.

(2) Jesus Christ demanding a special testimony from his own followers. "But whom say ye that I am?" We are called to knowledge: we are called to profession: we are called to individuality of testimony. We are not to be content with taking part in common talk, and sheltering ourselves behind general opinion; having special privileges, we must have special judgments regarding Christ and his doctrine.

(3) Jesus Christ, revealed by his works rather than by verbal professions. See how the case might be paraphrased: "I have been with my disciples for a considerable period; they have known my spirit, and seen my manner of work: they have not been told in so many words who I am: my appeal has been conveyed through service and through doctrine: it is now time that they should have grown far enough in spiritual strength and spiritual discernment to know the mystery of my personality,—I shall ask them therefore to declare my name and status."

Regard this as the true method of disclosing every individuality.

A teacher may say, "I am a very great man, therefore believe me:" it is beginning at the wrong end: let the doctrine produce its own effect: let the works be such as shall compel observers to inquire, What manner of man is this?

In the light of this suggestion, see the value of the charge that the disciples should tell no man of him. Men must be conquered by great deeds, not by great names: men must be trained to strength by thought, inference, comparison, and moral discrimination; not by sudden and startling displays of personal glory. God himself has adopted this method. His glory has ever been shown through his goodness,—his name has been approached through the beauty and splendour of his works.

31. And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

The disciples needed to be specially prepared for this disclosure. See the infinite and gracious wisdom of the course: as soon as they are strengthened by a distinct acknowledgment of his divine personality, they are called to bear the revelation of his sacrificial character! No sooner does he fully acknowledge his glory than he stoops to the depth of his sacrificial humiliation! To have told of the rejection and killing first would have overpowered the disciples: therefore (and herein are the subtle signs of his Godhead) he prepared them for the shock by the splendour of the supreme revelation,—I am the Christ! The personality gave value to the sacrifice, and at the same time gave an assurance that for once death would be made a servant rather than a master.

Regard this verse as showing (1) Christ's foresight; (2) Christ's preparedness for his work; (3) Christ's dominion over events,—"After three days rise again."

32. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33. But when he had turned about, and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

Peter rebuked Christ, and Christ rebuked Peter,—an altercation of more than mere words. It is charged with practical

truths: (1) Man's shortsightedness; (2) man's sentiment exaggerated; (3) man's audacity,—to think he can help or save Christ!

On Christ's side: (1) He rebukes the oldest; (2) he rebukes the wisest,—it was Peter who said, "Thou art the Christ;" (3) he shows that men are only worthy of him in proportion as they enter into his spirit.

34. And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

38. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him shall also the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.

These words seem to mark an epoch in the Saviour's teaching. The announcement has all the formality and solemnity of a new beginning. The principle had been the same from the first, but it had not been plainly stated in so many words. Henceforth there is to be no mistake. The "follower" is not the man in the crowd who can hardly give any account of himself; who is there because other people are there; he is the man who carries a cross, who rules over himself in Christ's spirit, and takes the law of his life from Christ. At first, Christ said, "Follow me." Now he says, "If you will follow me, take up your cross." It is an enlargement in words, but there is no change of spirit. Still, it is beautiful to mark how the cross is introduced into the ministry of Jesus Christ. First of all he takes it himself, and then he says, You must do the same. This is following! Doing what Christ does, and doing it because of his example and command. Sometimes we find it extremely difficult to say the key-word of our meaning. Other words we can say easily enough, but how to get out the master-word that says everything at once! In Christ's case that word was—"Cross." It has been a burden on his heart for many a day, and now he has spoken it out loudly. There are some words which if we do not say loudly, in high and hallowed excitement, we shall never say at all. The

minister says words in public which he could never say in private; he speaks from the whirlwind what he could never say in a whisper.

The words in this paragraph, 34—38, are spoken with great energy, as if spoken in haste which never allowed the speaker to take breath. He had so much to say, and he said it every whit in one brief paragraph! See how much he spoke in that flashing moment:—

(1) I am the leader of men,—"whosoever will come after me."

(2) My leadership is based upon the principle of self-sacrifice.

(3) This principle is of universal application,—"Whosoever."

(4) Though the principle is universal, the cross may be personal,—"his cross:" what is a cross to one man may be no cross to another. Every man has his own cross: he may break it or carry it: he must carry it if he would follow me.

(5) The world says, "Save your life;" I say, "Lose it,"—but mark the conditions, "for my sake and the gospel's;" not suicide, but martyrdom; not recklessness, but courage.

(6) To lose the soul is to lose the world. To lose your eyes is to lose summer and beauty. To lose your hearing is to lose music and eloquence. To lose your soul is to lose all.

(7) There is a law of inversion operating in human affairs: one day I shall be ashamed of all who are now ashamed of me. I shall come in my glory, and in the glory of the Father. Strange conjunction of words,—"Cross," "Glory."

In view of these words three things are clear: (1) That the application of Christianity to daily life is not easy; (2) that such application can only be made in the strength of him who demands it; (3) that whosoever makes such application will share the glory of the Son of man.

Chapter viii. 18.

"Having eyes, see ye not?"

SEEING DIFFERENCES.

OUR Saviour would have us use all our faculties. Christianity never forbids a man looking and listening and considering and concluding for himself. The great complaint which Jesus Christ made when he was upon the earth was that men would not look, would not hear, would not consider, would not sit down and think out for themselves great questions. They were traditionalists, they were believers in legends, and tales, and glosses, and ceremonies; but they would not use their faculties. Jesus Christ says, "Having ears, hear ye not?"—you must hear something: what is it you hear? noise, tumult, uproar? but you ought to hear more, you ought to hear music, whispering voices, minor tones, winds that come down as if by stealth from heaven, fragrance-laden, and attuned to the very symphonies of the sky. Having eyes, what do you see? surfaces, appearances? What do you see in the city? a network of thoroughfares, a panorama of street-life, a great confusion of traffic? That is not the city. The city is within all that; it is in the home life, in the beneficence, in the purpose, in the education, in the discipline of the citizens; the citizens are the city. "Having eyes, see ye not?" You see broad differences; but a beast could almost tell the difference between night and day. Things are not classified into right hand and left hand, and are not thus roughly distributed; there are fine distinctions, gradual shadings, colours that run into one another and run out of one another again, making strange alternations of expression and suggestion and symbol: why do ye not see the fine lines, the microscopic lines? it is there that the difference is to be really

found. When difference comes to be a mere vulgarity, then anybody can be trusted with it; but as to critical difference, the soul needs to be trained, taught, inspired. The natural man receiveth not the things that are of God, for they are spiritually discerned. The naked eye is assisted by the lenses of inspired reason and inspired faith. So our Saviour would have us use every faculty we have:—be up and stirring, ask questions, knock at doors, insist upon answers, show yourselves to be enthusiastic students, and God will give you some reply. He never answers indifference; he pays no heed to patronage; he is deaf to mere eulogium: but how he listens to the sighing of the broken heart, and to the prayer of him that is ill at ease! We are face to face, therefore, with a teacher who means to prosecute his inquiries to the end. Men do injustice to Jesus Christ if they suppose that he never wants them to ask any questions or raise any difficulties or state any doubts: he says, Empty your heart, be your own very self; if you are blaspheming, out with it; if you are doubting, speak your doubt; if you are wondering, tell like a little child what your wonder is. Thus he would deal frankly with men and lovingly; he would handle them like a creator, he would bless them like a saviour. Yet what a false impression exists regarding him! To go to church is now considered by some people to be a species of weakness. To read the New Testament is considered to be a kind of attention to ancient literature that no man of ample and complete scholarship would like to neglect. It should be otherwise,—never man spake like this Man. We should hasten to where he teaches as hungering men would rush to bread, and thirsting men would speed and almost fly to water, to fountains, and wells in the desert. Let us commune with him awhile; if he will touch us we shall feel the glow in our hearts.

We are called to sight, to discernment, to careful critical readings of all things; so the Saviour would challenge us, and say to men who are hastening along the road, See ye not that there is an end as well as a beginning to things? Men do not see the end; they see the beginning, the frothing glass, the glittering gold, the immediate pleasure. Who sits down and counts costs and reckons up and says, The sum total of this is——

and then states the whole in plain figures? It would seem to be part of our policy to shut our eyes, and to butt at things with a deadly fatalism. Why do not men hold up their heads, and look, and perceive, and penetrate, and detain things until they have been analysed and examined and cross-examined, and made to bear frank and complete testimony? If your religion has come into your souls without cross-examination and practical test and severest handling, let me say plainly that you have no true religion; you are simply giving house-room to a mocking and burdensome superstition. Look at the end; mysteries will then be solved, perplexities will then be disentangled, embarrassments will be smoothed down, and all things that have troubled even the conscience will be made to stand up in simplicity and be invested with self-vindication. To a little fellow-traveller I once said, "We may save a great deal of this journey by taking this cross-lane,"—a little path which lay like a diagonal across the field,—"shall we go?" He was a little philosopher; said he, "I always find"—it was a short "always," but it was the only always he had—"that there is something at the other end, a wall to climb over, or a ditch to leap over, or something very hard to do at the other end;" so he preferred taking the longer way round. I wish we could lay that more to heart. There are easy roads, tempting paths, and we say, Why not thus, and so, and be home almost at once? And, lo, at the other end we find we are in a blind alley, or there is a pit, or a ditch, or a high hedge, over which to leap or through which to force our perilous way. If men would look at the end as well as at the beginning they would be saved from a good deal of rash adventure.

See ye not that in the structure and economy of nature one thing bears upon another, that there is nothing alone, isolated, by itself, but that everything is part of something else; and that therefore we stand within a system of Providence? We do not always see how things are to connect themselves one with the other. Occasionally we have said, This is a solitary instance, and must be regarded as such, and must be wholly neglected with regard to all possible issues. Yet in seven years' time that very solitary thing has come up and said, You will need me now: I have been waiting all this time; this is your opportunity:

if I were not here you could not complete the case; you neglected me once, but to-day I am a necessity. We cannot escape the idea that there is a Providence. We may write it with a little p or a large P; we may call it Force, or Fate, or Necessity, or Mystery: but there it is,—an invisible Hand that puts things together, that stretches itself out beyond common lines to bring back things that have been ejected. There is a shaping hand. Each man may see it in his own life. Do not throw your experience away. It would be like murdering your best friend; nay, it would be a species of suicide. What is a man but his experience? What is to-day but the gathered past, the culmination of the centuries that are gone? Who made you, directed you, nursed you? Who was kinder than mother, gentler than nearest friend? Who opened the gate when you had lost the key? Who saved you in the peril, the danger, the household extremity, when there was no light and when no voice could be heard but your own, and that voice was lifted up not in thanksgiving but in agony and distress? Some of us could not go back from this testimony. If we did we should write upon our hearts —Liar, Coward, Ingrate, unfit for the society of the beasts that perish. We have had strange lives; they have been wondrously handled and directed; and we are here to say that many things that we thought were hard and cruel, and at the time intolerable, were amongst the richest of our treasures, the most sacred of our possessions and memories. But Providence means two things; it does not stand by itself; if it may be represented as having two hands it lays one hand upon Creation and the other hand upon Redemption. Only a Creator could be a true Father in all this ministry of Providence. The one necessitates the other. Only he who created the world can guide it. We may have to take it back to him again and again that he may pay attention to it, because we have spoiled part of its mechanism. He alone knows all its intricacy, all its economy, and he alone can guide it and bring it to its proper issues. If God care for one blade of grass, he must redeem the world. This is the sublimity of his love; it does not end upon little things; it begins upon them to show that it means still greater sacrifice. If God built one rosebud he built the heavens; and if he made man he meant to save him: and it will go hard if Omnipotence be worsted. I

know not what will happen; no man may make conjecture into a dogma, and set up his own speculations as authoritative conclusions; but it will go hard if God do not win at the last. No man can tell when the last is. God never gives up, until he finds the case utterly hopeless. Yet has he given to man the power of electing at last to be lost. What controversies God and man will have we cannot tell, but man has the dread power of telling God to his face that he has elected to be damned.

See ye not that there is a great difference in the functions, the gifts, and powers of men? Who made all this difference? It cannot be self-arranged. Self-arrangement of this kind would be scouted in all things material: why should it be admitted in things that are immaterial, intellectual, spiritual, and that lie close upon the metaphysic line that is not far from the existence of God himself? Let us say that every building in the town elected its own shape. Not a child that can go to school but would smile at the foolish idea. Let us propose to the child that the pillar said it would be a pillar, and the window a window, and the lamp a lamp, and the beam a beam, and that thus it was all settled,—see how the little one chuckles his unbelief, and looks upon you as a species of intellectual fool. Am I then to look upon society and say—Painter, poet, farmer, merchant, preacher, you arranged all this among yourselves? Nothing of the kind. If men are going along the right line of development they are carrying out a divine economy. The poet never could be anything but a poet. The adventurer never could be anything but an adventurer. You cannot keep an explorer at home; you may attire him in the clothes of civilisation, and set him down by your fireside with the very nicest book that has lately been issued from the press, and you may whisper to one another that you think he is now likely to remain at home. He will never remain at home. The spirit of travel is in him. He would crush his destiny if he remained at home longer than to please us for a moment or two. He must be off,—child of the wind, child of the sea, he is at home in the wilderness, in the black continent, in the far-away places of the earth; otherwise he is not at home. All this difference makes society possible. If we were all alike we could not have society. It is because we differ that we can cohere; it is because we are

not alike that we can hold companionship one with the other. This makes society tolerable. Without it society would be intolerable, because it would be monotonous, flat, blank; no man would have any idea different from any other man, and all speech would be useless. And this makes society progressive. We live by friction, we live by attrition; it is because we have conflict, controversy, contention, that we advance in our highest education and complete our spiritual manhood under the inspiration and guidance of divine providence. If men do not see these things, these things will become to them mysteries, elaborate confusions, stunning and stupefying bewilderments. Keep your eye open and watch, and see how cunningly he works who builds the stars and paints the flowers. He doeth all things well; give him time; pray to him with your patience; praise him with your forbearance; show your confidence in him by your long-suffering,—by the end he elects to be judged.

See ye not that all this wondrous economy of nature and life is marked by a very marvellous system of compensation? so that the little may be great, and the great may be little; he that hath much may have nothing over, and he that hath little may have nothing under, and the very frailest life known to us has its own palace, and its own crown, and its own sceptre, and its own unique ability. What a study is here! Along this line men may meet with revelations every day. The microscope writes its own bible; the telescope unfolds its own revelation. There are some poor weak animals that in the daytime have an almost contemptible appearance, but they can see in the dark—and you cannot; you must judge by the night as well as by the day. You cannot tell how very contemptible you look in the night-time when you are stumbling about and do not know where you are; and the creatures you laughed at in the hours of the daylight are looking at you and wondering how you dare venture out at all. There are creatures that have enormous strength, and there are other creatures that have no strength at all, but they have all but infinite cunning, and they do not fear your mightiness; they will make no noise or demonstration, and yet they will overturn you, and bring you to ruin. There is a power of cunning as well as a power of muscle. The whole

scheme of nature is written over with the word Compensation. One bird wants to be an eagle, but the Lord says, You have got something the eagle would like to have. Some poor things look very feeble on land, but they become poetical symbols of grace when they move into the water. Is there a more ungainly figure than that of a swan trying to walk? It attracts universal attention; it is smiled at as a very grotesque thing: but the moment that same swan presses the waves poets come to write about it, and painters come to paint it, and people say, How exceedingly graceful! There are compensations all through and through nature. You, for example, are very poor: but look how cheerful you are! Your cheerfulness is worth—who shall say what it is worth? What hope you have! How you sing in the night-time! How in the coldest winter day you come upon men like a cheerful fire! Is no consideration to be paid to that? You have no social standing; but look what health you have! what a digestion! what a monstrous digestion! Is that to be set down in cyphers? Is no account to be made of that? Reckon up your mercies. You are not tall; but how alert you are! You have no vigour in muscular fight; but what sagacity you have in counsel! Draw the balance well, be just to God. What bird shall fight the eagle? None. Yet there is a bird that shall drive the eagle mad; and the eagle cannot get at it. Which is the smallest bird? The humming-bird, and the humming-bird can kill the eagle. The eagle would strike a lion, but the humming-bird is so small that the eagle cannot get at it. Naturalists have told us that the humming-bird, dear little ruby throat, settles on the head of the eagle, and pecks out the feathers one by one; and the eagle flies away, mad with agony, screaming through the infinite arch; it is only a little humming-bird that is just taking the feathers out, and pecking away at the head all the time. "Fly away," says the humming-bird, "I like this very much." If the eagle could get at that humming-bird we know what would happen. Alas! that parable has more interpretations than one. It is your little trouble that bites you. You could fight a whole court of lawyers, but some little care lays hold of your head and takes such interest in you that sleep is an impossibility; and a man dies for want of sleep. The conies are a feeble folk, but they make their houses in the rock.

Spiders have been found, saith the proverb, in kings' houses. Other animals that are very weak in themselves go forth in bands, all together, then how mighty they become! There is a locust that has defied an army of soldiers, a beetle that has beaten a standing army, that has gone forth night and day and eaten up all the crops; and soldiers have had swords and sabres and spears and guns, and none can tell how many other weapons of war, and the beetle has still gone on eating. It is a curious system in which we live. It never made itself. Is there anything more melancholy than that a man should go through the world blind? "Having eyes, see ye not?"—that a man should go through a whole day's history and have nothing to write about at night?—that a man should walk through the city, and have seen nothing of poverty, necessity, sorrow, pain? This is to lose the world; this is to lose all that is best in life.

One great question may sum up the whole: See ye not a difference, large and vital, between Christ and every other teacher? Compare them. Jesus Christ is always willing to be compared, to have a true opinion formed, to have himself tested by the spirit which he inculcates, and the conduct which he inspires. What has done for the world what Christianity has done? Let us be just. We have seen what was done for Terra del Fuego by Thomas Bridges; we have seen how a place which British ships of war were forbidden to touch has become a civilised and Christian garden through the ministry of Christ. Have you seen a remarkable book called "Metlakahtla," edited by Henry S. Welcome? No man can read that book without becoming a Christian. Everything may be risked upon that one testimony. The Metlakahtlans are described in that book as amongst the most ferocious and murderous tribes on the North Pacific coast—men of intellectual capacity though in barbarism; men civilised enough to be able to make very cunning workmanship in bracelets and jewellery; men philosophical enough to find that fire may be produced by friction; men civilised enough to get mad by drinking rum. One man, William Duncan, had it laid upon his heart that he would like to teach the people Christianity. His thought was laughed at and scorned. The people who were approaching the frontier had to build strong

fortifications, and to watch them night and day lest these ferocious and murderous people should break through and work havoc and ruin in so-called civilised life. William Duncan still had his dream of evangelisation. He enlisted the services of one who could initiate him into the mysteries of the language of Metlakahtla. He found it a picturesque language, full of metaphorical colour and image and force; he studied it, made a phonetic representation of it—for there was no written language—and acquainted himself so far with it as to be able to tell a little plain simple tale. He told the people he wished to tell them about the white man's God, if they would allow him. He went a step at a time, cautiously, little by little; and without professing now to give the detail of the wonderful volume, the end was a garden of the Lord, every man subdued; within thirty years the whole place transformed, transfigured. And if certain metaphysical Christians had not gone there the simplicity of the Metlakahtlans would have remained uncorrupted. It is when your unbalanced theologian or mere metaphysician wants to vex the human mind with distinctions that are not vital that great Christian labour is brought to an unhappy end. But there stands the fact. The Metlakahtlans were found in this condition; a man goes amongst them with nothing but a warm heart and a clear conception of Christ's work, and the end is civilisation, education, an interest in spiritual things, a falling down before the Cross of Christ, and an acceptance of Christ as the God and King and Saviour of men. Who did it? What was his name? Buddha? No. Mahomet? No. What was his name? "Jesus Christ the Son of God." He never loses his power. To-day he will make the wilderness to blossom as the rose. Why not tell the world this, and turn its wildernesses into smiling fruit-fields?

Chapter ix.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

[An Analysis.]

1. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

THIS verse would seem to belong to the preceding chapter. It may be taken alone for homiletic purposes, and treated under the form of an inquiry, viz.,—When does the kingdom of God come with power?

(1) When it so comes as to show the comparative paltriness and worthlessness of other kingdoms.

(2) When it brings the human heart into a state of joyful obedience to its spirit and precepts.

(3) When it throws upon the mystery and solemnity of the future a light which destroys the terror of death.

If the verse be regarded as an introduction to the scene which immediately follows, it will be seen how tenderly, as well as how wisely, Jesus Christ prepared his followers for the most startling events in his life. He was about to be transfigured: what if unpreparedness on the part of the disciples should overthrow their self-control, and disable them for further service? The light may come too suddenly, then what can happen but blindness?

2. And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

3. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

4. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.

5. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be

here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

6. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.

7. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

8. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

The whole incident may also be treated by way of inquiry, viz., What purposes would be answered by such an event as the transfiguration? The event is so unique and so sensational, that we may, without irreverence, ask what purposes useful to mankind could be answered by it. Clearly, the transfiguration would, amongst others, answer four purposes:—

(1) It would confirm the newly revealed personality of the Saviour, "Thou art the Christ." Great revelations do need confirmation. They startle and unsettle the mind. Has not God generally accompanied his greatest prophecies by some outward and visible sign? The prophecy of the Messiah, by sacrifice and various ritual? Prophecies of destruction, by uses of the rod, and weapons of war? Prophecies of restoration, by figures and symbols which satisfy all the longing and all the imagination of hope?

(2) It would show that the death which he had foretold was not the result of weakness on the part of Jesus Christ. It was not a fate which he would have resisted had his physical resources been greater. The disciples, on hearing the prediction of his death, might have reasoned—"He is overborne by superior force; no man goes voluntarily to death. He is hemmed in by hostile powers; he yields because he cannot successfully resist." The Transfiguration showed the contrary. See the heavenly light! Behold the heavenly visitants! Hear the heavenly voice!

(3) It would show the relation of the Christian kingdom to prior dispensations. Moses and Elias were present. The law and the prophets led up to the gospel. The hour of fulfilment was at hand. God's kingdom, though revealed in sections and phases, is but one. The blade and the golden ear are one. Sinai and Zion are (spiritually) different sides of the same holy hill. "Moses wrote of me." We miss the instructiveness and solemnity of history when we break it up into unrelated chapters.

History is one. Its sovereign purpose is the unfolding of the divine kingdom.

(4) It supplemented an individual testimony by a general and authoritative revelation. Peter had said, "Thou art the Christ." Now the Eternal One says, "This is my beloved Son." When Peter spoke, he spoke not of himself. Flesh and blood had not revealed, etc. All true sayings come down from heaven. The testimony was now established by three witnesses. There was henceforth no occasion to refer to Peter's word. Peter's word was introductory. Peter was, in a sense, the last of the prophets. The world needed a higher testimony than had yet been given: here it is—"This is my beloved Son;" there is no height beyond this!

Observe the command which comes after the revelation,—Hear him! Christ is the interpreter of himself. The command may be paraphrased thus: This is my beloved Son; if you would have the proof of his sonship, listen to him, hear his speech, attend to his tone; let him be heard for himself. If Christ were more listened to, he would be more profoundly loved and honoured. How many people, even in Christian congregations, have gone regularly and seriously through the word of Christ for themselves? The question is not, How many people have heard sermons? but, How many have studied the whole life of the Saviour for themselves? We never knew an infidel who quoted the words of Christ accurately and completely.

"Hear him" may be regarded not only as an indication of authority, but as a challenge to human intelligence and consciousness. Hear him, and say if he speak not to your hearts; hear him, and say whether any voice be so full of music, of sympathy, of love; hear him, and say if he speak not in the language of heaven the things which have been dumbly struggling within you, and set in cloudless light the hopes which you could never get beyond the region of misty and self-contradictory speculation.

Peter, James, and John alone accompanied the Saviour. The world's profoundest secrets and sunniest hopes have ever been in the keeping of two or three men. Lonely men, scattered here and there, have told the world when a great event was to be expected: they have predicted comets, and set men watching for new stars, and started men on expeditions full of peril and propor-

tionate riches. We cannot all be treasurers; we cannot all be librarians. Thank God for mountaineers, for the strong climbers who first see the coming on of the new day!

9. And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

10. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

We have been dwelling upon the scene which disclosed itself on the top of the mountain: we now enter upon the scene which took place on the way down,—a scene which shows Christ giving a charge, and the disciples displaying intense interest in the revelation conveyed in that charge. We are amazed that silence should be enjoined upon the disciples: why should they not be allowed to tell this thing to all men? Surely such a statement must have a good effect upon the public mind. Instead of enjoining secrecy, why does not Jesus Christ summon thousands of witnesses to behold a repetition of the transfiguring glory? We are impatient to secure results. We would, in our imperfectness, try to do by a stroke what he takes many days to accomplish. Was it not a waste of power on the part of Christ to be transfigured in comparative secrecy? Would not the transfiguration have done more for his interests than the sermon on the mount? Yet the sermon was heard by a multitude, and the transfiguration was seen by three uninfluential men! This is one of the divine processes which we should have reversed. So foolish are we, and ignorant!

(1) All physical phenomena are but temporary.

(2) Wonderful deeds are only permanently valuable as expositions of spiritual truths.

(3) Every miracle or wonder in Christ's life was incomplete until the resurrection had been accomplished. Half-truths or unfinished statements often do more harm than good. When the resurrection had been accomplished, all the other miracles would fall into their proper proportions,—the resurrection itself would be the one miracle of universal and eternal importance. It is the epitome of all the rest.

(4) What the disciples have already seen is to be eclipsed by what they have yet to see. They have seen the transfiguration,

they shall yet see the resurrection! Is not this the law of divine discipline and progress? Can we ever see the richest jewel in God's treasures?

(5) The speculation of one age is the dogma of another. The disciples questioned one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. They had the resurrection before them; we have it behind us. Wonderful in its width of meaning was this rising from the dead! What did it mean? It meant Redemption completed, Death overthrown, Heaven opened! "If Christ be not risen from the dead," etc.

11. And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?

12. And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.

13. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

The disciples now begin the deepest questions which they had to propose. They showed themselves students as well as observers. Men misread prophecy. They do not see the principles which are represented by names. John the Baptist was the pre-Christian Elias. Men do not always fully understand their representativeness; even the poorest of men are more than they seem to be: even a little child may typify the kingdom of God.

14. And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

15. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

16. And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

17. And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

18. And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

19. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

20. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

22. And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to

destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

23. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

24. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

25. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

26. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

27. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.

28. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

29. And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

Different diseases require different treatment,—"this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Illustration may be found in common life; among diseases of the soul may be set down—Pride, Lust, Covetousness, Self-confidence, etc., the cure of which may require variations of treatment. However many and subtle the variations, Christ's power is available for all.

On the expression, "This kind goeth not out," etc., LANGE remarks: "It were a mistake to regard this demoniacal possession as different from others in kind, and not merely in degree, and hence as constituting a peculiar kind, for which specific prayer and fasting were required. The Lord rather conveyed to his disciples that they had not preserved or cultivated the state of mind and heart necessary for the occasion, that they were not sufficiently prepared and collected to cast out so malignant a demon. . . . The demons of such complete melancholy could only be overcome by most earnest prayer and entire renunciation of the world." STIER says: "Our Lord says two things in the *But:* first, that he had meant the casting out of devils by the similitude of removing mountains; and, secondly, that to control spirits, to break the evil will, the wicked power in the kingdom of sin, and of rebellion against the Almighty, who tolerates it according to the law of freedom, and even only thus removes it, is, indeed, another and greater thing than the simple working of miracles on helpless nature."

In this incident, note: (1) A household in misery because of one of its members. Trouble may be intensive as well as

extensive. One prodigal may destroy the peace of a whole family. (2) A household troubled by an uncontrollable circumstance. The sufferer in this case was not blamable. Some troubles we bring upon ourselves; others are put into our lot by a power beyond us. (3) A household united in deep concern for one of its members. The father spoke not for himself only, but also for others: "Have compassion on us, and help us." The beauty of individual and social sympathy. An unfeeling heart a greater calamity in a family than the most painful affliction.

The incident may be viewed not only from the point of the household, but from the point occupied by the Church. Thus: (1) The Church expected to have restoring energy; (2) the Church overborne by the evil which confronts it; (3) the Church publicly rebuked for its incapacity; (4) the Church shown to be powerless in the absence of Christ.

Look at the incident as showing Christ's position: (1) Christ calm in the midst of social tumult; (2) Christ exposing himself to severe reprisals in the event of failure,—he spoke rebukingly before he performed the miracle; (3) Christ asserting his independence,—"Bring him unto me." Jesus needed no help: "Without me ye can do nothing,"—but without us he can do everything. (4) Christ over-ruling and destroying evil: he never put evil into any man,—always he sought to cast it out! Christ's antagonism to evil was implacable and eternal.

Learn something from the incident respecting the restoration of men: (1) The worst of cases are not hopeless; (2) devils do not come easily out of men; (3) Jesus Christ not only expels the devil, he gives his own personal help to the recovered man. "Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up." We need Jesus even until we are set in heaven. It is not enough that the devil be expelled; we must have the direct, daily, gracious help of the Saviour. The devil throws down; Jesus lifts up.

30. And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.

31. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

32. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

Antecedently, there is nothing more improbable than that a

man who has worked so beneficently should be "killed." The very miracle which he has just performed should itself bring around Jesus Christ a whole army of protectors. Men should say: "The man who has done this good deed shall never be injured: we take him under our care, and not a hair of his head shall perish." We must, then, go deeper than mere circumstances to find the meaning of this mortal antipathy. What is its meaning? The meaning is that evil and good are in eternal antagonism, and they must come to a final contest. Jesus has cast out a devil; now the devil will try to cast him out.

The 32nd verse shows how mystery is the occasion of fear. The fear in this instance was most pathetic. Even Peter was silent. There are circumstances which make the most flippant and talkative of men solemn. There is no mystery in a straight line; when the curve begins, mystery begins. Jesus Christ was going out of sight for a time,—a specified time, and therefore under the dominion of the very power which seems to be worsted in the fight.

"He shall rise,"—the word of hope spoken in the day of gloom.

"The third day:" (1) A full separation; (2) a brief separation, —"For a small moment I have forsaken thee," etc.

About this announcement there are two remarkable things:—

(1) Jesus Christ gave his disciples the advantage of preparation: so in all our life, could we but see the meaning of things, we are always being prepared for further disclosure of God's purpose and method.

(2) Jesus Christ followed the surprise of grief with the surprise of hope,—"He shall rise the third day." The surprises are equal. That such a man should be killed is impossible. He can work miracles, why, then, should he not save himself? That a man who was weak enough to be killed, should also be strong enough to rise again, was a counterbalancing surprise! Why not use this very strength to prevent suffering and death? If he could overcome death itself, why not overcome those who sought to kill him? He who can do the greater can of course do the less. Herein is the mystery of sacrifice,—the problem of atonement.

Jesus "gave himself;" he laid down his life: socially there was murder,—spiritually there was sacrifice.

33. And he came to Capernaum; and being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

34. But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.

35. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

36. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,

37. Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

(1) This dispute about greatness can only be prevented by a deep attachment to Jesus as head of the Church.

(2) All selfish discussions degrade Christian dignity, and impair Christian usefulness.

(3) This dispute is proceeding to-day more vigorously than ever. Who is to be high priest? Who is to be leader? Who is to go first in the procession? Who is to sit on the right hand? The Church is still fighting the battle of etiquette and status. Poor Church!

In Jesus Christ's statement of the case two things are clear:—

(1) That selfishness defeats its own object.—"He that exalteth himself shall be abased." "He that saveth his life shall lose it."

(2) That greatness is a spiritual condition, not a social distinction.—The child-spirit is true greatness. "Whoso abaseth himself shall be exalted." "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." "Pigmies are pigmies still, though perched on Alps, and pyramids are pyramids in vales." A man may be great in grace. By the very necessity of the case all outward distinctions must become less and less, but spiritual attributes endure as long as the being of the soul.

Notice the beautiful picture set forth in the 36th verse. Jesus with a child in his arms!

(1) Childhood teaches simplicity, dependence, trustfulness.

(2) Childhood represents freedom from care, anxiety, and fear of the future. The apostle put away childish things, not child-like things.

(3) Jesus values life, not mere age. We baptise human life, not human birthdays.

Jesus Christ has set a child in the midst of the whole world to teach the highest lessons. The child's dependence; the child's ignorance; the child's affliction; the child's death,—these things teach us evermore.

38. And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us.

39. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

40. For he that is not against us is on our part.

41. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

42. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

A sign of great self-importance was this on the part of John! The veto would sound well as the voice of the Church. The right use of authority has always been a subject of special delicacy; and the danger of narrowness has always threatened to impair the primary design of the gospel.

The incident may be homiletically treated as showing five things:—

(1) Whoever attempts to cast out devils has the sympathy of Jesus Christ.—Instead of the word devils, use evils, and the meaning will be clear. Intemperance, ignorance, idleness, etc. The whole reformatory system which society has set up, etc. The outworks are Christ's, as well as the citadel.

(2) All who work in a right spirit are in reality one body.—"No man which shall do a miracle in my name." There are two classes excluded—(1) Miracles wrought to satisfy vanity; (2) miracles wrought to promote selfish ends. A beautiful picture is that arising out of the unconscious unity of all good workers.

(3) The solitary and unclassified worker is not ignored by Jesus Christ.—"We saw one casting out devils in thy name." Here is individuality of effort. Each man has his own way of working. Some men cannot work in companies. The solitary

worker should not be cynical towards companies. Companies should not be harsh to solitary workers (ver. 42).

(4) There are more good people in the world than are gathered around conventional standards.—"Because he followeth not us." We are all prone to make ourselves the standard of measurement. This may be more than weak, it may be sinful. Sects seldom know much of each other. Their mutual animosity is in proportion to their mutual ignorance. Sectarianism is hateful; denominationalism may be convenient and even useful.

(5) Long before men reach the point of miracles, they may reach the point of acceptance with Jesus Christ.—The man in the text had been working a miracle; but Jesus says that the gift of a cup of water shall be treated as a miracle of love. See the variety of work: one man casts out a devil, another gives a cup of water! They are both servants in the same household.

As an interlocution between Christ and the Church, see the infinite superiority of the Master! He speaks the noble word of charity. He draws within his love the strange worker. It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of man! Thanks be to God, the Church is not to pronounce the decisive word!

The 42nd verse must be guarded from selfish and paltry interpretation. It is easy to offend some people. We may offend a man's vanity, and it is right to do so: we may offend his ignorance, and have the Master's approval,—we are not to offend the Christ that is in any man; we are not to discourage him in doing good; we are not to grieve the Holy Ghost that is in him.

43. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

44. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

45. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

46. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

47. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

48. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

49. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

50. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

A perusal of distinguished commentaries has not made the whole meaning of some of these expressions plain to us. We question whether "the kingdom of God" (ver. 47) and "hell fire" (ver. 47) refer to the future and invisible state. The whole expression is figurative. A man does not enter into heaven because he has one eye, nor is he cast into hell because he has two eyes. The hand, foot, and eye, are not to be taken literally, but symbolically; otherwise what a spectacle would the Church present! The meaning may be this: It is better for thee to mortify every passion in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, so as to enter into true life, than to gratify every lust so as to create within thee corruption full of worms, and a heat terrible as hell. The heart of a depraved man is a Gehenna. There the worm dieth not, and the fire is never quenched. The salt of Christ's presence and discipline can alone save the heart from loathsome corruption.

Homiletic use may be made of the symbolism:—

(1) The hand,—strife, defiance, theft, oppression, etc.

(2) The foot—trespass, wandering instability, supposed solidity of position, etc.

(3) The eye,—covetousness, lust, the fallacy of appearances, the temptation of the visible as against the invisible, etc.

The 49th verse has been variously commented upon, thus:—

"By salt understand the spirit of wisdom and grace, seasoning the effect, and by fire tribulation, whereby the patience of the faithful is exercised, that they may have a perfect worker." (Beda.) "Salt is just reproof, which is to be tempered with love, and wherewith our love is to be seasoned." (Jerome.) "It is an exhortation to the vigour of faith, by which others are preserved also, when we use our gift to season them; and lest the acrimony of salt should be too acting, he adds the other member of love." (Calvin.) "The interpretation of the sacrifice of the condemned—and the fire and salt as eternal fire—except in the case of the salt having lost its savour, is contrary to the whole

symbolism of Scripture, and to the exhortation with which this verse ends: 'Have this grace of God—this Spirit of adoption—this pledge of the covenant, in yourselves;—and,' with reference to the strife out of which the discourse sprung,—'have peace with one another.'" (Alford.)

General Note on the Ninth Chapter.

The transfiguration may be compared to the full noontide light. The scene is one blaze of such glory as the disciples had never beheld. The conversation in passing through Galilee is full of the shadows which point towards eventide. The miracle which intervenes shows Christ at work, though the shadows were lengthening; the conversation which follows shows Christ teaching the very doctrines which would be best illustrated by the humiliation which he had predicted. In this chapter we have brilliant light, solemn shadows, noble service, pathetic instruction. Learn how to meet death, viz., in the midst of holy labour, and in the strength of holy principle.

Chapter x.

AMBITION REBUKED.

[An Analysis.]

1. And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judæa by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.

2. And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.

3. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4. And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

5. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

6. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

8. And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

9. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

10. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.

11. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

12. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

THIS passage, which will hardly ever be required for public use, suggests some points which ought not to be neglected by the preacher.

(1) Jesus Christ taught. The word is very significant. Ignorance was never approved by the Saviour. He saved through light, never through darkness. He conducted specific intellectual processes, as well as processes distinctively moral. It was his delight to simplify truth.

(2) Jesus Christ taught the people. Not a particular class,

but the people as a whole. His appeal was to humanity. His teaching was as impartial as the sunshine. This is the glory of Christian truth. It challenges all hearts, in all ages, and in all lands. It is a heavenly rain, not a local fountain.

(3) Jesus Christ honoured the holy teachers who had gone before him: "What did Moses command you?" Truth is one. We are not to go to new teachers for new truths. We find new phases, new applications, and the like, but Truth is one, because God is one. This is our security amid all changes of ministers and teachers. In so far as the men have been true to God, each can say, What did my predecessor tell you?

(4) Jesus Christ honoured the tenderest relations of the present life (vers. 7–9). He did not ignore the present because of the future. He treated no vow with levity. There is a spurious spirituality which overrides social bonds and human compacts, but Jesus Christ never gave his sanction to such blasphemy. Without a home himself, he yet guarded the home-life of the world; able to live alone, he yet upheld the sacredness of social institutions. He taught the whole law—the law of home, the law of society, the law of the Church: "There is one lawgiver."

This profound exposition was given in reply to men who tempted him. Even the enemy may occasion some truths to be more fully revealed. The lawyer tempted Christ, and behold the picture of the Good Samaritan was painted! We are indebted to the darkness for the stars.

13. And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

14. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

15. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

16. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

Even the disciples did not know their Lord. The persons who are nearest to us may actually know nothing of our character. The disciples had mistaken ideas of greatness: to them the greatness was not in life, but in circumstances. Jesus reversed this idea: the tree is in the seed: he cared for children, and so he profoundly cared for men. Jesus "was much displeased;" this

displeasure enhanced the value of the benediction. The blessing was thus shown to be no cold compliment, nor a merely social courtesy; it was an act of the heart. The displeasure would be as memorable as the blessing. The disciples measured themselves by their manliness; Jesus taught them to measure themselves by their childlikeness. Notice three remarkable things:—

(1) The power of parental instinct. The mothers knew, without having received any formal intimation, that a man like Jesus Christ must love little children. They did not wonder whether he did or not, they knew that he must. The heart soon finds out the quality and purpose of Christ. Let thy heart speak, O man, and it will tell thee that the Saviour is thy friend, and that he will hail thee as a suppliant.

(2) Parents may be interested in the Christian welfare of their children without being much concerned for their own. This is a startling possibility. There are men who seldom open their Bibles who rejoice in the Biblical knowledge of their children: so with Sabbath-keeping, church-attendance, and the choice of companions. They have more than a merely outward respect for religion, yet its redeeming mystery has no place in their hearts! They admire, but they do not repent.

(3) Jesus gives more than even parental love expected. The parents wished that Jesus would touch their children. They would have been pleased had he taken the children's hands into his own. What did Jesus do? "He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." See what he was asked to do, and see what he did! "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." The children were almost in heaven! A practical question may be asked here: Are our lives worthy of the advantages we enjoy in childhood? Some of us were brought to Christ, and were given to him in many a fervent prayer: have we gone upwards or downwards since?

17. And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

18. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.

19. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

20. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

21. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

22. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

The young man was farther from Christ than was the young child. The child was brought: the young man came, but he was farther away. His earnestness was good, for he "came running," as one in great urgency; his attitude was good, for he "kneeled" to the Saviour, as one who is humble-minded; his inquiry was good, for he asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Men are not saved by good points, but by a good spirit. Men who ask great questions should expect great answers. Was the demand excessive? Manifestly not; it cannot be excessive to give up time for eternity, to forfeit a troubled hour for a happy immortality, to give up a speck of dust for an infinite inheritance. In his treatment of this young man, Jesus Christ showed—(1) That he was not anxious to add to the mere number or respectability of his followers. What an opportunity of doing so was here! A man with a carriage! A man who could make money questions quite easy! Some of us would have smoothed the way for his entrance into the Church —we should have talked about culture, refinement, speciality of sensibility, and the like. Jesus Christ showed (2) that outward amiability is not to be mistaken for spiritual character. "Jesus beholding him loved him." There was charm of countenance: there were remnants of a beautiful child-life; there was a struggle with the spirit of worldliness. Every man is more or less beautiful as he knocks at the gate of the kingdom: he stands between two worlds: the far-off light flushes his face with peculiar glory. (3) That the wisest and the best, as well as the dullest and the worst, must bear the same cross. "Take up the cross and follow me." What, the cross in youth? Yes. What, the cross where there is so much morality? Yes. Will it not

be enough to lighten the crosses of other people? No! A requirement like this, made under such circumstances, ought to secure for Jesus Christ, viewed as a merely human teacher, the confidence and veneration of mankind.

23. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24. And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

25. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves Who then can be saved?

27. And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

How hard it is to give up one world for another! Wherein lies the difficulty? (1) This world is seen, the higher world is invisible; (2) this world gives immediate pleasure, the expectation of the higher world is often associated with sacrifice, self-mortification, and pain; (3) it seems so easy to work for both worlds, as the division between them is so marked. What has business to do with theology? How can money interfere with prayer? Can stocks, funds, investments, speculations, become as a cloud between a man and his Maker? See how Jesus Christ puts the matter: "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" The emphasis is upon the word "trust." There are rich men who are poor in spirit. We should rejoice when the riches of the world fall into the hands of good men, because it is better for all great forces to be under Christian than under unchristian control. There is no merit in poverty. There is no wickedness in wealth. The one question relates to the spirit, not to the circumstances. The 25th verse must be read in the light of the 24th: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man who trusts in his riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" The confidence that is put in riches is so much confidence subtracted from the honour of the Father.

28. Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

29. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man

that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

30. But he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

31. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

Peter's all! What a tone of self-compliment there is in Peter's statement! "We are the right men: we have done the right thing: we are comfortably off; let the rich young man do what he may." Is there anything more deadly in its effect upon the spirit than religious self-satisfaction? The piety that gathers its skirts up, and avoids the mud of common life, is the most diseased and intolerable of all respectability. How pathetic was the reply of Jesus! No man serves him for nought! He who loses his life for Christ's sake, finds it,—finds it immortalised and glorified. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," etc.

32. And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

33. Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:

34. And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

Jesus went before: went alone: separated himself from the people and from his disciples. There was something in the action which filled the observers with painful amazement. His own thoughts were society enough for him meanwhile. He had seen the end. He had come to a turn on the life-road from which he could point out the Cross to others; as for himself, he had always seen it—seen it from unbeginning time, but now he had to point out to others that grim, dread object. No wonder he wished to be alone for a time. It is not easy to find the beginning of a sentence which is to convey tidings so startling and so terrible,—so Jesus goes alone to prepare himself to tell of the sacrifice. Observe (1) Jesus knew all that was coming upon him, so he was not surprised into suffering and death; (2) Jesus himself told the disciples, so he showed his perfect knowledge of the future; (3) Jesus said he would rise again, so his death was

a sacrifice, not a martyrdom. He who had power to rise again, had power to prevent the taking of his life. The resurrection showed that the crucifixion was not a necessity arising out of Christ's weakness.

35. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

36. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?

37. They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

(1) The natural result of extreme ambition is selfishness. What did the sons of Zebedee care for other people? (2) Ambition may not be the less criminal for being associated with religious position and influence. The feeling shown by these men should always be discouraged. There is an earnestness that is fanaticism. The ambition that is unholy is always also unreasonable.

"That the sons of Zebedee wished for ecclesiastical, rather than secular honours, may be thought probable from the allusion that is made here to the supreme dignities in the great Sanhedrin. The prince of the Sanhedrin (HA-NASI) sat in the midst of two rows of senators or elders; on his right hand sat the person termed AB (the father of the Sanhedrin); and on the left the CHACHAM or sage. These persons transacted all business in the absence of the president."—(*Adam Clarke.*)

The sons of Zebedee asked for honour in the kingdom, they did not ask for fellowship in the preliminary suffering. Bengel well remarks: "Very different were those whom our Lord was first to have on his right hand and on his left."

38. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

39. And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:

40. But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.

Lange says: "Different views are entertained of this reply." De Wette explains it: "Your request arises from an incorrect view

of the character of my kingdom, which is spiritual." Meyer paraphrases: "Ye know not that the highest posts in my kingdom cannot be obtained without sufferings such as I have to endure." Luther says: "The flesh ever seeks to be glorified before it is crucified, exalted before it is abased." Referring to the latter part of verse 40, Adam Clarke says: "The true construction of the words is this: To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, except to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." Dr. Clarke argues that the words "it shall be given to them," "are interpolated by our translators." Bishop Horsley says the meaning is, "I cannot arbitrarily give happiness, but must bestow it on those alone for whom, in reward of holiness and obedience, it is prepared, according to God's just decrees."

The practical ideas of the passage might be homiletically expressed thus:—(1) Human ignorance should restrain human ambition,—"ye know not what ye ask;" (2) human weakness should modify the expression of human confidence,—"are ye able? they say, we are able;" (3) human history should be left to the development which God has purposed for it,—"ye shall drink; ye shall be baptised; but——;" (4) human position will be determined by human character.

41. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

The primary conditions of brotherhood had been violated by the two brethren and their mother, and the ten had a right to be angry. All men who wish to outreach their brethren deserve indignation. Religion does not annihilate anger, it regulates its expressions and penalties. The incident may be homiletically used, as—(1) A warning against an unbrotherly disposition; and (2) an example of Christ's method of treating unbrotherly men. Jesus Christ does not expel them; he declares their ignorance, he points out their weakness, he shows that suffering is the portion of those who follow him, and that such suffering is to be endured, apart from promised official position in his kingdom.

42. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44. And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.
45. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

This exhortation shows that the spirit of self-abasement is to distinguish the entire course of the Christian life. The Church is not to look to secular governments for precedents or patterns, but to the Son of man alone. The ἄρχοντες were proud, domineering, fond of power, and self-sufficient; nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of Christianity, and this was emphatically the time to say so. Jesus Christ adapted his teaching to the varying phases of human nature; at this time the phase of ambition was uppermost, and the exhortation took its course and tone accordingly. Adaptation is the secret of successful teaching. The teacher who speaks to the line of actual experience will never want a theme, and if his teaching be wise he will never speak without profit to his hearers. (1) Christian influence is not official; (2) Christian influence is spiritual; (3) Christian influence can be legitimately attained only by the Christian spirit,—"whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister (διάκονος), and whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant (δοῦλος)." It has often been explained that διάκονος means a servant of a superior order, always near his master's person and admitted to a certain degree of his confidence, whereas δοῦλος means a slave, one who may be employed in the most menial service. The distinction, however, is not always maintained in the Christian writings. For example, in Matthew xviii. and 23rd verse, we have a king "which would take an account of his servants (δούλων);" all the officers of Oriental courts were regarded as slaves, but the servants here referred to are the provincial officers employed to collect the revenue for government; in the Persian court they were called *satraps*. In Matthew xxv. 21, the word is used, "Well done, good and faithful servant (δοῦλε)." Without insisting upon any fanciful or even real distinctions between these words, the spirit of the exhortation is perfectly intelligible; abasement is the condition of true and permanent eminence. The simplicity of the condition is not without its dangers, for is it not possible to simulate humility? Is there not a stooping to conquer, which is merely an attitude of the body, not a gesture of the soul? There is an amiability

which covers a hard and relentless heart; there is an outward austerity which may conceal the tenderest geniality of spirit.

The expression, "to give his life a ransom for many," is not to be taken as limiting Jesus Christ's atonement. The atonement is not the subject of discourse; Jesus Christ is speaking of himself simply as an example of service,—a service so profound and so pure as to include even the surrender of life itself.

The whole address bears upon Christian position, the spirit by which it is to be attained, and in which it is to be held. Jesus Christ is not speaking against secular authority, civil magistracy, and the like; his remarks are exclusively confined to the affairs of his own kingdom. There must be rulership in civil society, and in religious society as well. Rulership is by no means arbitrary; it is founded upon the instincts and necessities of human nature. In civil society sovereignty may descend from generation to generation without regard to the fitness of the sovereign; in Christian society true rulership is a question of character and capacity. The modest, cultivated, intellectual Christian will, in time, attain his proper position. Zealous and foolish mothers may secure for their children an external position of authority, but the real authority will always be held by men who have drunk most deeply into the spirit of Jesus Christ. Such men care nothing for authority for its own sake; they are not the slaves of officialism; yet even in the absence of nominal status they wield the profoundest and most durable influence over the thought and sentiment of the Church.

46. And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, sat by the highway side begging.

47. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

48. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

49. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise: he calleth thee.

50. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.

51. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should

do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

52. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

(1) A man representing the side of human life which is marked by deprivation,—no sight, no bread. (2) A man seizing a great opportunity,—"when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth." (3) A man resisting the most obstinate difficulties,—"many charged him that he should hold his peace." (4) A man repeating his prayer until the answer came,—"Jesus commanded him to be called." (5) A man stating his own case in his own words,—"Lord, that I might receive my sight." (6) A man turning to a right use the gifts of God,—"he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way." Application—(1) You are needy; (2) you have heard that Jesus passeth by; (3) you have sight; how are you using it?

Chapter x. 23–30.

23. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24. And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

25. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

27. And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

28. Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

29. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

30. But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

THE DISCIPLES ASTONISHED.

JESUS CHRIST is here moralising; that is to say, turning an incident to moral and spiritual account and use. He is musing aloud. The little transient anecdote has passed, but Jesus Christ's doctrine respecting the event abides for ever, an eternal voice in the Church. Mark is the only writer who takes notice of the look and gesture of our Lord on this memorable occasion. We have noted often that Mark is the one who takes most notice of the Lord's looks,* as if the devoted disciple never turned his eyes away from the Lord's expressive face; as if indeed the tongue could not say all that Christ wanted to say; as if he who would know the Lord's meaning wholly must keep his eyes steadfastly on the Lord's countenance. Although Jesus Christ is moralising, he is not conceding anything. He does not call the young, rich man back, and say, You can take this kingdom upon your own terms. Jesus Christ does not build up his party

* See "The Silent Looks of Christ," *post*, p. 176.

or Church or society by compromise. The Lord's Church is a Church of the Cross, a society of crucified hearts. No man is in the Church who has not been crucified. He may be inquiring about the Church; he may even entertain admiration for the framework and general policy of the Church; but he is not inside until he has entered by the door of the Cross. There is no other door. We are crucified with Christ, or we are not in his society. Who, then, is in the Church? We must lay emphasis upon this word "hardly," so as to get out of it the meaning—with what infinite difficulty shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God. They will barely get in; they will hardly be in at all; if they do enter in it will be by an agony not to be expressed in words. It is much to have a Lord that recognises difficulties. This Lord of ours is not one who, by a wave of the hand, passes men into the Church; he says, It is hard work getting into the kingdom of God; it is difficult to give up one world for another. Here is the one world; it is visible, tangible, what we call real (though therein we are false), what we call certain (though therein we repeat our falsehood). Where is the kingdom of God? When you have found God you will find his kingdom. The kingdom of God is not in meat or in drink; the kingdom of God cometh not with observation; the kingdom of God is not a visible framework which men can estimate and walk around and form opinions about; the kingdom of God is a new consciousness, a new selfhood, a new creatureship, a new life, the beginning and pledge of eternity. If the kingdom of God were a set of doctrines which we could buy or appropriate or understand, we might as well have that kingdom as not have it; for it amounts to nothing more than assenting to a number of things which other men have written at the dictation of other men ages past, and if there is anything in it we may as well have it. That is not the kingdom of God; that is a make-up of man's own; the kingdom of God is spiritual, penetrative, vital; changing the spirit, changing the soul. If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; the old self is not only dead, but buried, forgotten; every thought, every impulse, every desire is new. If the Lord did not recognise difficulties some of us could not live. It is hard for some men to pray; it is good for you to whom it is hard if you can get as far in prayer as "Our Father." If you

put a full-stop there it will be taken as if other men had spoken all the prayer, clear away down to the resonant and grateful Amen. That is all you could do. You did that with difficulty; you are of the earth earthy; you love the world, you hug the dust, you are the victims of the senses: yet there is just one feeble ray of the upper light struggling with the darkness of your materialism, and you have got as by miracle and agony to "Our Father." It is easy for other men to pray; prayer becomes their native tongue: silence to them would be penalty; they must speak devotional language, fall into devotional attitudes, and their very sighing is attuned to a religious emphasis. But it is hard for such men in some cases to give. That is their curse; they will pray with you all day, but they will not give you anything. It is easy for some men to give time, advice, sympathy; but it is impossible for them to give money. It is easy to others to give money, but they cannot or will not give time; they are busy, busy—doing nothing; busy wasting their lives; busy pursuing nothing, and overtaking it. One man's difficulty is another man's pleasure. For want of this discrimination we have talked in cruel generalities, so that they to whom another feather's weight would become a burden intolerable, have been distressed for want of that fine discrimination which separates character from character, not in vulgar lumpishness, but in fine gradation, in exquisite weight and balance.

"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." Then is it easy for poverty to enter that kingdom? It is as difficult for poverty to get in as for wealth to get in. There is no virtue in poverty; there is no vice in wealth. The more the good man has the better. I pray that every good man may become just as rich as he can bear to be, and yet retain his piety, because the more he has the more the poor have; he is only treasurer, steward, custodian for Christ. How hardly, with what difficulty, shall they that have any kind of riches enter into the kingdom of God! Do not limit the word "riches" to the word "money." There are many kinds of riches, and all kinds of riches constitute difficulties in the way of spiritualisation. The poorest, commonest kind of wealth is money. Some are wealthy in morality. They can never see the kingdom of God. No "good"

man can enter the kingdom of God: his goodness will be the ruin of him. Here is a young man who has kept all the commandments; not a day or a week, but all his life; handled them with consummate ease, made familiars of them, pets, idols; done them over and over again, could not help doing them, liked to do them. Was he in the kingdom of God? He was not within millions of leagues of that dominion of light and love and liberty, growth and progress and beauty, sweetness and security, benevolence divine. The difficulty is that some persons cannot distinguish between morality and Christianity. Morality is a question of manner. Etymologically, "morals" is a word which means manners; it means indeed manners that might be limited by attitudes, relations of an external and mechanical kind. Does piety of the true sort, then, exclude morality? Nay, verily, it includes it and glorifies it; puts it in its right place; divests it of all propitiatory value, and looks upon it as a necessity, arising spontaneously out of vital relations with God. It is not to be exhumed, it is to be emitted as flowers emit their fragrance. Persons who are rich in their respectability are not in the Church; persons who can sneer at the ill-behaviour of others are not in the Church; people who can point a finger of scorn at an erring life are not in the Church of Christ; people who are so noble as never to forgive have nothing to do with Christ, and ought never to mention his name by way of profession. There are men who are theologically exact enough to preside over a theological perdition, but who are not Christians; they can hold grudges in their hearts against other men. The man who can hold a grudge cannot pray; no prayer can get through a throat stuffed with that wool. We know nothing about this kingdom of God as revealed in Christ until we are prepared to be crucified in every finger, in every hair of the head, and to have spear-thrusts all over the life. Who, then, is in the kingdom of God? O thou cruel question, ring on! we cannot answer thee. Some are rich in ancestry. They are the most difficult persons in the world to deal with; they are nothing in themselves, but, oh, how grand they are in their predecessors, who in their turn were nothing, but grand in their progenitors. The most curious part of the psychology of such a case is that such people are often as humble as humility itself in ninety-nine points, but on the

hundredth point the sky is not blue enough to shine upon them, and the sun acquires his dignity through lighting them to their occupation. All this must be cut off, or there will be no kingdom of God. Little mechanical morals, musty antiquated respectability, and even intellectual genius, and money, must all be cut off, one after the other, or all together: such tumours overswell the man, so that he cannot crush himself into God's narrow door. This is Christianity.

Look at the poor disciples! "They were astonished at his words;" and again (ver. 26), "And they were astonished out of measure." What a difference between the Lord and his followers! Jesus Christ spoke from an altitude that made the whole universe on a level; but those who were dwelling a thousand worlds lower down in the great house of space were amazed and bewildered, embarrassed and overwhelmed, by everything the great Lord said. This is not wholly to be deprecated. Even astonishment has a part to play in our spiritual education. When we have reached the *nil admirari* stage of development, at which we wonder at nothing, we might as well have the extinguisher placed upon us, for the universe is played out, and creation is underfoot, a thing without value, fascination, or utility. Blessed is he who keeps his astonishment young, fresh, expressive; happy in perpetual estival is he who still loves the wayside flowers, and who when he sees the first violet exclaims as if he had seen a new planet. Do not let little things lose their charm; do not allow spring to come back with her lapful of simple beautiful field-flowers and you take no notice of the largess; welcome the vernal queen. What she brings is from heaven: all flowers grow there; here they are exotics: let them take you back, by progress, beauty, suggestion, unspoken sympathy, to their native clime: flowers are the thoughts of God. At the same time our piety must pass beyond the stage of astonishment, and find its rest in the point of service. Christianity must renew its youth by giving itself away for the benefit of others.

How impossible it is to crush all self-consciousness out of men! No sooner had Peter heard this discourse, so tender in its eloquence, than he began to say unto the Lord, "Lo, we have

left all." Think of Peter's "all"! How long would it take to write an inventory of that fisherman's "all"? Yet he pronounced the word "all" with such elongated emphasis that anybody would have thought he had really made some sacrifice for Christ. How nobly did the Saviour reply; how he blotted out Peter's contribution; how he made the senior apostle ashamed of himself, as he "answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." Every man is overpaid. Here we see the right use of religious hyperbole or exaggeration. Think of a man having a hundred mothers! Jesus Christ often uses self-correcting phrases. The Lord often puts our lessons at the point of impossibility, that we may next drop to the point of reality. "An hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands." Every Christian has these; the realisation is already accomplished. All houses belong to the Christian heart; all children belong to the regenerated, Christ-expressing soul; the last born into the family of God owns creation: other ownership is legal, nominal, mechanical. The poet holds the landscape, and no other man ever did hold it; the Christian holds all wheatfields and vineyards, the cattle upon a thousand hills are his; nay, saith Paul, when we are counting up our little riches, all things are yours, angels, and principalities, and powers, and things present, and things to come, and height and depth, and life and death, are yours. We do not realise our possessions; we turn whiningly away from infinite riches, and groan because the body has certain wants which cannot be instantaneously appeased or satisfied. We must live in divine exultancy; we must find our riches in God. Herein is it true that no good soul can ever be poor; herein is the twenty-third psalm the psalm of life—"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Chapter xi. 1-19.

CHRIST'S ROYALTY.

[An Analysis.]

1. And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples.

2. And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.

3. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

4. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.

5. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?

6. And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

7. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.

8. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way.

9. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

10. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

11. And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

FOR homiletic purposes the narrative may be used to show the features which will characterise the day of Christ's recognised royalty. When Christ's royalty is fully recognised—

(1) All possessions will be consecrated to his service. Jesus Christ gave his disciples a word whose power was to overcome all hesitation on the part of the owners of the colt; that word was—"The Lord hath need of them." The expression itself is peculiar. Why should the Lord have need? Strange combina-

tion of ideas—lordship and necessity! Yet, on the other hand, what necessity can he have who has but to express it in order to have it satisfied? By a legitimate exercise of fancy, we may amplify the idea and include all orders of men, all degrees of talent, all capacities of endurance and activity. Say to the poet, the painter, the musician, the orator, the rich man, the man of influence, "the Lord hath need of thee," and there will be instantaneous and grateful response!

When Christ's royalty is fully recognised—

(2) All the services of Christ will become the subjects of ardent and universal praise. According to Luke, "the whole multitude began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen." (1) The true worker will eventually be recognised; (2) works will be the basis of just and permanent elevation; (3) God will be praised as the fontal source of all true benefaction,—the multitude praised God.

When Christ's royalty is fully recognised—

(3) His essential greatness will overcome his momentary humiliation. "Blessed be the King that cometh." (Trace Jesus Christ's life, and show how much there was in it to depress and crush; yet, through all, there is a shining of his divine lustre.) In addition to doing this a contrast may be drawn between what is transient and what is permanent in the Messianic life: poverty, sorrow, humiliation, all kinds of social and temporal disadvantage, on the one hand; on the other, riches, rapture, exaltation above every created height, and all the honour and homage of the universe.

When Christ's royalty is fully recognised—

(4) Religious enthusiasm will overwhelm or absorb all Pharisaic formality. According to Luke, "Some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples; and he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Enthusiasm is natural; stoicism is unnatural. When the soul is inspired, the lips must speak. About enthusiasm three things should be remarked: (1) That it is essential to success in all pursuits; (2) that it reaches its highest intensity in the development of the religious life; (3) that its suppression would excite the reproaches of nature.

The whole scene shows the effect of a true view of Jesus Christ upon the heart of man. Such a view transports the soul with the holiest delight, and draws the worshipper, even while in the poverty and feebleness of the body, nearly into the ecstasy of the heavenly worshippers. The scene gives a hint of the joy which shall one day fill the hearts of all men.

12. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

13. And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

14. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

This incident may be homiletically used to show: (1) The doom of those things which do not meet the wants of the time; (2) the terrific prospect of meeting a disappointed Christ; (3) the perfect dominion of the spiritual over the material; (4) the vast possibilities of undoubting prayer.

Olshausen has some striking observations as to the cursing of the fig-tree: "The difficulty is diminished here, if we understand by it that kind of figs which remain hanging on the branches all winter, and are gathered in early spring. In that case, the sense of the words would be this—while the common kind of figs were not yet ripe, and the time for gathering them in had not come, Jesus yet perceived that this tree on which he sought for figs belonged to that other kind, which bore at that time ripe and refreshing fruit, and thus he could rightly expect figs on the tree."

15. And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

16. And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

17. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

18. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

19. And when even was come, he went out of the city.

These verses, taken in combination, present a vivid view of

Christ's twofold method of conducting his ministry: that method was first destructive, then constructive. About the cleansing of the temple four things are noticeable: (1) Jesus Christ did not connive at abuses for the sake of securing popular favour; (2) Jesus Christ did not allow abuses to be continued on the ground that the circumstances were temporary,—he knew that the temple was soon to be destroyed; (3) Jesus Christ showed that man's convenience was to be subordinated to God's right,—"my house is the house of prayer" (Luke xix. 46); (4) Jesus Christ showed in this, as in all other cases, that the right one is morally stronger than the wicked many. The healing "the blind and the lame" (Matt. xxi. 14) occurs most impressively in this connection; after anger came peace; after an assault upon strength came a gentle ministry upon weakness. The incident may be separately treated, as showing: (1) That the temple is spiritual not in an exclusive but in an inclusive sense,—the wants of the spirit include the necessities of the body; praying included healing, but money-changing did not include praying; and (2) that society should be taught to connect the temple with the most benevolent, practical, and spiritual ideas. It is a great error in any community to shut up the house of God six days out of seven. When society is penetrated with true Christianity, the house of God will be a library, a hospital, a school, and a prayer-house, all in one.

Chapter xi. 11.

"And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, he went out."

THE SILENT LOOKS OF CHRIST.

THIS is one of the passages of Scripture that the reader may easily pass without allowing his attention to be sufficiently arrested. The *singularity* of this act will not escape your notice now that the verse is read as a text. Jesus Christ entered into the city, and into the temple; merely looked round about upon all things, and went out. The *comprehensiveness* of this act will make you feel as if you were girt about with eyes. Jesus Christ entered into the city and into the temple, and looked round about upon *all* things. The great things, and things minute and obscure and comparatively worthless. If he thought it worth while to create the daisy, will it be beneath him to stop and look at the little beauty which he painted? We do not look upon *all* things. We look upon faces, surfaces, transient aspects of things; but Jesus looks into spirit, purpose, motive, heart, impulse, will, and all the secrets of that supreme mystery amongst us called human life.

The *silence* of this act will almost affright you. Jesus came into the city, looked round about upon all things, and did not say one word. That is terrible! When men speak to me, I can in some measure understand what they are aiming at. But there are some looks, even amongst ourselves, that are mysteries; there are some glances shot from human eyes that trouble the beholder! Can guilt bear the lingering enquiring gaze of innocence? Does not the corrupt man fear the eye of the just man more than he would fear the lightning at midnight? May not that look *mean* so much, even if it be a look of unsuspicion and of entire ignorance, so far as the immediate circumstances are concerned? Yet it *may* mean so much; and that potential mood is the hell of the bad man.

You see, then, that our text leads us to look, not at the miracles and words of Jesus Christ, but to study his *looks*, as indications of his character. And it may be profitable, after we have spent some time in examining the eyes of the Saviour, to enquire how we should *return* the looks that are so full of meaning. The subject is, *The Silent Looks of the Son of God!*

In reading the Evangelists, have you ever noticed that Mark, above all the other writers, takes note of the looks of the Saviour? Different men see different phases of the same object. Luke began his Gospel by saying that he was going to tell Theophilus *everything*. Who can tell everything about the Son of God? I speak not only for myself, but for every minister in this house, and, I believe, for the whole Church of God, in saying that, after we have written our sermons and our books, the thing that strikes us most is their *emptiness*. We seem to have missed the very point we intended to indicate, and when we have ceased our talk and our effort, there comes upon us a sense of having ill done what we aimed to do, and we feel as if we had not yet begun the story that is as a centre without a circumference.

"And Jesus looked round about" (Mark x. 23). It would appear that Jesus Christ's look was, then, a *circular look*. Instead of fixing his eye upon one point, he fixed his vision upon all points, and, as it were, at the same moment of time. "And Jesus looked round about." This is an action specifically by itself. "And having looked round he saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!" The look of the preacher should mean something. Earnest men should have a look peculiarly their own. What, my friend, if thy sermon has failed to take effect because thy face gave the lie to thy voice? There are looks *and* looks. When will men discriminate between things that differ? when will they cease to regard all things as alike? and when will the time come when men can see *meanings* even in unlikely things? I have seen on the plainest faces looks that had soul in them. I have seen poor people look at me, in telling the story of their trouble, in a way that has gone to my very heart, and melted it in tender sympathy with their sufferings. I have seen persons to whom

intelligence of a startling nature has been brought—intelligence of broken fortune, of expired friends—who could not say one word, and yet I had rather seen a tiger than the look of disappointment and shame and fear and pity that I have seen upon some human faces. Go and tell a man who is laughing—innocently laughing—that his only child has been found dead on the roadside. The man does not *talk* to you, except with his eyes and his face. There is no storm so terrible as the darkening and the raining of grief! Jesus Christ accompanied his words with a look, and sometimes left his look unaccompanied by a word.

"But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter." He looked them all into attention, and then gave them the lesson. Is he not looking here to-day? Should there be any turned heads amongst us, any indifferent eyes, any careless hearts? I thank God I believe that so many people as I see before me would not come together at twelve o'clock without earnestness in their hearts regarding this ministration of the gospel. Observe the peculiarity of the occasion. "When he had turned about, and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter." The look was a general caution; the rebuke was an individual application. The look was as a common judgment; the rebuke was a personal law. Jesus looks when he does not rebuke, but he never rebukes without looking. My friend, thou wouldst see more of the eye of God if thou wouldst drop the scales from thine own. But my subject is the *silent* looks of the Saviour. Luke, in his twenty-second chapter, indicates a remarkable instance of such looks—viz., "*The Lord turned and looked upon Peter.*" Did he speak? No. Did he cry out, "Shame!" No. What did he do? He turned and *looked* upon Peter, and broke the man's heart. May he break our hearts in the same way ere he cut us in pieces with the sword of his anger, and utterly slay us with the breath of his judgment! He had told Peter that before the cock crowed he would deny his Master three times. Peter had just given the third denial; immediately the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter's heart of rock melted into a river of tears. What was there in the look? Does the eye of Jesus look memories at us? broken vows, oaths, pledges? Is the eye of the Saviour like a mirror, in which a man may see

himself? Is the eye of Jesus Christ terrible as a sword of judgment, that it can cut to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow of a man?

Mark gives us another silent look in his third chapter and fifth verse. "And when Jesus had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand." He said nothing to the individuals themselves; he only looked round about on them with anger. I have heard of the sword that flamed in Eden, that moved from the east to the west, and back again, night and day. But oh, I could have run through that sword, methinks, compared with this circle of fiery anger which now surrounded the Son of God! anger of the most terrible kind,—anger arising out of *grief*. The anger of malice who cares for? The anger of mortified pride, vanity, ambition—who heeds it? The anger of mere selfishness,—what is the meaning of that? But when *grief* turns to anger; when *love* itself becomes wrath,—who can abide the day of its coming? Is there anything so terrible as "the wrath of the Lamb"—that greatest contradiction in words, apparently, yet that consummation of purest anger in reality? "The Lord looketh on the heart." The Lord is *always* looking. He looketh from heaven, and beholdeth the children of men. The Lord looked to see if there were any that feared him, and that honoured his name. There is no *protection* from his eye. This is a terrible statement to be delivered to the bad man! You are never alone! When you think you are alone, your solitude is but relative. You can take the thinnest veil and hide yourself from men, but who can hide himself behind impenetrable curtains and screenings from the eye of fire? All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do! "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" The question is unanswered and unanswerable. God fills the universe, overflows infinitude, and thou canst not escape his eye! I think I have heard something before of this silent look. You may recall it. When I read in the Apocalypse, as I have just read our morning lesson, about John seeing, on the Isle of Patmos, eyes like a flame of fire, I felt that I had read something like that before. Where? Can you tell me? Young friends, who are supposed to have just read the Bible, you who have the youngest, tenderest, freshest memories, can you

tell me? Where? You read something like it in the Book of Exodus. The eye of the Lord never dims. If you have once read of it, you never can forget it; if you have once seen it, it is an eternal presence!

When the Egyptians pursued Israel, and there was a halt made, a cloud came between the Israelites and the Egyptians; the one side was brightness—that is on the side towards the Israelites—and the other side was darkness; *and the Lord looked out of the cloud and troubled the Egyptians!* Have I your attention? Do you follow me? The Lord *looked* out of the cloud and troubled the Egyptians, and his glory struck off the iron from the wheels of their chariots, and they were dismayed! Not a word was spoken; there was no thunder in the air. What was it then that troubled haughty Egypt, proud of her resources, fat with the marrow of her accursed victories over a bound people,—what was it that troubled the haughty queen? It was a look, *a silent* look! An argument could have been answered mayhap: if not answered, it could have been replied to. But a *look!* who could return it? When the lightning strikes a man, who can look at it? Ay, when the summer sun goes behind a cloud, as it were, and suddenly strikes down upon the lookers up, who can bear the sting of his fire. So, then, you will find that the eyes of the Lord are often spoken of in the holy Book. Are these eyes *terrible* then? May any one look at them? Herein is the mercy of the Lord seen. What is terrible is also gentle. "Our God is a consuming fire!" "God is love!" "He numbereth the stars!" "He bindeth up the broken in heart!" He walketh upon the wings of the wind, and the clouds are as the dust of his feet, and his utterance shakes the kingdoms and dominions of the universe! Yet not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father's notice! If the looks are terrible they can also be benign. Hear the proof of this: "I will guide thee with mine eye." Lord, what is the history of thine eye? the eye that troubled Egypt, and struck off the iron from the chariot-wheels of the host of Pharaoh? the eye that divided the waters, and made them stand back, that the Lord might pass in the person of his chosen one? "I will guide thee with mine eye." The eye that makes day, and summer, and beauty, and the eternal light! Behold the goodness and severity of God! "I have heard," said the Psalmist, "that power belongeth unto God!"

And he trembled, and he took up his pen again, and wrote, "To thee also, O Lord, belongeth mercy!" Omnipotence in the hand of mercy is the idea of righteous government. So the eyes of the Lord are very terrible. Flames of fire are the only symbols by which they can be likened amongst us; but they are also gentle, melting with dewy tenderness, yearning with unutterable pity; looking out for us; watching our home coming, looking over the hills and along the curving valleys, if haply they may see somewhat of the shadow of the returning child!

Will it not be profitable for us now to enquire: If such be the looks of God the Father and the Son, how should we *return* looks that are so full of significance and purpose? Are we not able to use our eyes to advantage? Hear the Word of the Lord. "*Look* unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." How? Look not with the eyes of the body, nor with curiosity; but with reverence, with eagerness of heart, with determination of love, with all the urgency and importunity of conscious need. He asks us to look; to look at himself; to look at himself, not on the Throne of Judgment, but in his capacity as Redeemer and Saviour of the world. Have you looked? Pause! There is no need to be in haste. Have you *looked?* Observe our earliest lesson this morning—viz., there is looking *and* looking. I have seen a dog look towards the sun, but he saw it not! The beast always seems to be looking upon the flowers of the meadow, but it is not seeing them! Have you *looked* with your *heart*, with your hunger, with your urgent need? Have you looked with that expectant, piercing look that means, "I *will* see"? "Yes," says one of my hearers, "I have looked, and I have a comfortable sense of having seen the Lord; but I get so weary, and jaded, and worn out by the difficulties, frets, temptations, and chafings of this earthly life, that sometimes I do not know what to do." Then let me tell you what to do. If, for a moment, I have the advantage of you, I will use my advantage to teach and comfort you, if I can. You are weary, worn, dispirited, tempted, discouraged, and do not know how to go on. Go on thus—*looking unto Jesus!* You will see how the various texts belong to one another, and constitute one piece of solid religious teaching. *Looking* unto Jesus. Returning the look of the Saviour. Not a hasty glance, but a steady, importunate, eager, penetrating "look-

ing for." And he is only behind a veil. If you did but know it, there is hardly a cloud between! He will come from behind, and say to the heart that has waited for him, "For a small moment I have forsaken thee, but with everlasting mercies will I gather thee." It was better to have that small moment. There may be a monotony of kindness, a monotony of light. Better to have a momentary sense of orphanage, and then to be embraced with a still fonder clasp by the infinite love of the eternal heart!

Look unto Jesus even through your tears. Tears are telescopes. I have seen further through my tears than ever I saw through my smiles. Laughter hath done but little for me; but sorrow and a riven heart have expounded many passages in the inspired volume that before were hard, enigmatical reading. Blessed be God, we can see Jesus through our tears. He knows what tears are. Jesus wept! The eyes that John saw as a flame of fire the Jews at the grave of Lazarus saw as fountains of water. "And coming near unto the city, when he beheld it, he wept over it." No man can fathom the depth of that river, or tell the bitterness of that sorrow. You have tears. Every man amongst us has his tearful times. But we use our tears wrongfully if we do not lift up our eyes and look through them unto Jesus in the heavens! So much for the comfortable side of this. Dare I turn to the other side? Surely, for I am a steward only. May I say another word that shall not be so tender? Surely, for I am an echo, not a voice. Am I here to make a Bible for the comforting and soothing of men, and not to expound a Bible that looks all ways, and pierces all things? If I now speak with apparent harshness, believe me that it is a cry of pain, that I may bring some men to consideration and decision in a right direction. My subject is the silent looks of the Saviour—the silent looks of God—and the method in which men are to return the glances of the divine eyes. Let me say that those who will not look now *shall* look! The great sight shall not perish from the horizon without their beholding it. Hear these words—"They shall look upon me whom they have pierced! They would not look upon me, but they *shall* do so!" The great cross shall not be taken up and set away in the heavens as a centre of holy fellowship without those who despised it having one look at it! What will be the consequence of their looking? They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn! The

look was too late; the look was not in time. You have put your fingers in your ears while the sweet music of the Gospel has been appealing for the attention of your heart; you have shut your eyes when the king has come in to show you his beauty. But he says he will not break up this scheme of things without every eye beholding! Every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him shall look upon him. Shall I add another word that no human tongue is fit to speak? How shall I utter it? If I could let my heart say it, I would. But it must be spoken with all the incompetence and brokenness of the voice. There shall be a cry in the latter time, and the cry shall be this—"Hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne!" Hide us! What from? "The sword?" No. "The terrible phenomena?" No. But from the *face*—that anguished face, that smitten face, that insulted face! Oh! I see the marks the thorns made! I see the red streaks upon it that I made when I smote him in the face and said, "Prophesy!" Oh, hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne! Shall it come to this? Is he not the fairest among ten thousand and altogether lovely? Is there any one whose beauty is to be compared with his? You say, "Our God is love." Yes, "Our God is a consuming fire!" You say, "The eyes of the Lord are a comfort to his people." So they are. But the eye of the Lord struck off the iron from the wheels of the Egyptians on the night I have just spoken about.

We shall have to look: the only question is, how? Are we prepared for his coming? How are we prepared for his face? By going to his Cross. He proposes that we should meet him in his weakness. He appoints the place. He says, "Meet me where I am weakest; when my right hand is maimed, and my left, when my feet are pierced with iron, and my side is gashed with steel, and my temples are crushed with cruel thorns,—meet me there!" Then having met him there, when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, he will be the same Saviour, as gentle and as pitiful as ever. And now, the Lord's hands are his again, he will use them for the opening of the door of his kingdom, and the lifting up of all who put their trust in him!

Chapter xii.

JESUS CHRIST'S METHODS OF TEACHING.

1. And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

2. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.

3. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.

4. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.

5. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.

6. Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

7. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

8. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

9. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

10. And have ye not read this Scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:

11. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

12. And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

INSTEAD of telling men their faults in so many words, Jesus Christ often set forth a parable which avoided personality, and yet vividly represented the features which he wished to correct or condemn; not only so, he drew men into a condemnation of themselves by showing their own conduct at such a distance as brought a new light upon it. The parable before us is a case in point. The people having heard the parable, "knew that he had spoken it against them." There is a moral interpreter in every man's heart.

In this parable we have—

(1) A striking way of teaching the highest truths. For the moment Jesus Christ turns aside from what is distinctively religious, and assumes a case which might occur in ordinary life. Here are men in certain business relations: they act in such and such a manner: what do you think of their conduct under such circumstances? Jesus thus begins on common ground. There is not a word of what is ordinarily known as religion in his statement, and yet his inferences are directed to the highest spiritual ends. This is a striking way of teaching truth. Begin with men on their own ground; force them to apply their own conclusions; show them that they must either accept Christianity or give the lie to their own reason. Thus: Men complain that without faith it is impossible to please God; but why should they so complain when, as a matter of fact, it is just as impossible to please themselves without faith? Or again: Men say, why does not God give us all we need without our having to pray? when they act daily on this very principle of prayer in relation to their own children! So throughout the whole scheme: if men would but narrowly look into their own way of doing things, they would find in the human a germ of the divine. Christianity completes and glorifies human reason, and never impairs or dishonours it. This striking way of teaching the highest truths is open to all Christian teachers. They must study human nature, and show men the full meaning of the partial moralities which are too often mistaken for perfect righteousness.

(2) A vindication of the simple justice of God's claim upon mankind. Look at the reasonableness of the case as shown in the figure of the vineyard. The vineyard belonged to the man; he did all that was necessary for its protection and cultivation; and at the season he sent for the fruit. On these simple lines God finds foundation enough for his claim upon the homage and love of the world. (1) Here is proprietorship: "All souls are mine." (2) Here is culture: "What more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done?" "He maketh his sun to rise," etc. (3) Here is reasonable expectation: "At the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard." This is God's case in relation to ourselves. We cannot get out of it.

We are imprisoned by our own reason, and the measure of our sanity is the standard of our obligation.

(3) A gracious view of malignant behaviour. The owner of the vineyard did not take vengeance at first. He gave the husbandmen the benefit of every doubt. The servant might have acted unwisely, so he sent another; the second might have brought himself under just condemnation, so he sent a third; and so on until the bitter end. God is slow to anger. Judgment is his strange work. Is he quick to mark our iniquities, and eager to bring down upon us his terrible sword? But see how bad behaviour encourages and strengthens itself in wickedness! The husbandmen beat the first, they wounded the second, they killed the third! Vice emboldens itself quickly. The youth who laughs at an oath to-day will himself blaspheme openly to-morrow. There is a lesson here to those who neglect sermons, or undervalue opportunities, or treat slightingly all good advice. See the culmination! The men who began by beating a servant ended by killing the Son! This is not exceptional. It is the natural and necessary course of sin.

(4) An assurance of just vengeance upon all bad men. The Lord of the vineyard will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. According to the account given by Matthew, the men who heard the parable pronounced the judgment themselves. When Christ asked what the Lord of the vineyard would do, the people answered, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him their fruits in their seasons." This is a solemn fact, viz., that men will judge themselves, and pronounce the heavenly vengeance just. The wicked will say Amen to their own condemnation! In the long run the sense of justice that is in every man will assert itself, and acknowledge the righteousness of God.

13. And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.

14. And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?

15. Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it.

16. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar's.

17. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

(1) Flattery missing its aim. Sin of all kinds always misses its aim; its apparent successes are all momentary and unsatisfactory. Sincerity can see through flattery. When a man is right in his own heart the words of other men cannot do him any harm. Flattery is poison to the weak, but it has no effect upon the strong. (2) Patriotism directed by righteousness. "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." Be honest Whenever there is a claim honestly made it must be honestly met. (3) The twofold duty of man pointed out: to Cæsar,—to God. He who fulfils his obligations to God fulfils them also of necessity to man. The greater includes the less. Religion does not hold political obligations in contempt. Prayer and taxation must go together so long as we are citizens and subjects as well as saints. (4) Insincerity turned into reality. "And they marvelled at him." There was no pretence about this wonder. The answer stunned the flatterers, and brought to their cheeks every drop of real blood that was in them. Who can stun like the Almighty!

18. Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

19. Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

20. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.

21. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.

22. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.

23. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.

24. And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God?

25. For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.

26. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

27. He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

This is the case of men who spend their time in getting up little neat arguments. They think their cases complete: They feel quite sure that such instances must carry conviction to every mind. Such men, too, are fond of the *reductio ad absurdum*, their logical recreations. It amuses them. They chuckle hilariously over the feats of their nimble wit. Look what a case the Sadducees had! A woman had seven husbands on earth, which of them will she choose as her one husband in the next world; and are the remaining six men to have no wives hereafter? "Ha! ha!" said they, "how ridiculous he must look when we put such a case to him! Come, we have caught him now, and the public shall see how we pluck his stolen feathers." Away they went. On the road they stopped a moment here and there that they might laugh just once more by way of anticipation. The man who had undertaken to state the case declared that he could not keep his gravity, the thing was so infinitely amusing, and so dazzlingly self-evident as an argument. One woman: seven husbands: resurrection: all the seven putting in a claim: the woman bewildered and unable to make a choice: ha! ha! The man who reported the case was regarded as having found a pearl beyond price. Lucky dog! it had fallen to his lot to puncture the Christian balloon. So away they went, merry enough, and sure enough of an easy and brilliant victory. They stated the case. The Saviour was not agitated. As soon as they ceased he said to them, in effect, "You fools, in the resurrection there is no marriage: unities are established on a new basis: you are wrong in your fundamental position: go home and learn common-sense before you put any more riddles to a Christian teacher." Jesus Christ will show that all objectors are fundamentally wrong. They have no ground to stand upon. Their cases are all bubble-like. The wittiest objector will find that his blade has no handle. Every objector forgets the one thing which makes all the difference between genius and insanity.

The reference which Jesus Christ made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is very suggestive. He showed the Sadducees that if they gave up belief in the spiritual state, they must also give up belief in God himself; forasmuch as God called himself the God of

Abraham, who had long been absent from earth, so God was the God of the living. It is even so. We cannot surrender one part of Christ's teaching without surrendering the whole. If we break one commandment we break all. If we subtract we destroy. Tender is the life of Truth! And yet how gentle its corrections,—"ye do greatly err." Solemn, even to sadness, are some of the rebukes of the Saviour.

28. And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29. And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

31. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

33. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

This incident shows that indirect influence may be exerted by Christian teaching. Even if the scribe had not proposed this inquiry he would have received advantage from the answer which Jesus Christ returned to the Sadducees. He was evidently impressed with the wisdom, self-control, and high spiritual claims of Jesus Christ. Ministers should take a lesson from this. Besides the persons who are immediately interested in our ministry, there are others who are quietly and almost under concealment looking on, and forming their opinion of our temper and competence. We know not where the influence of a sermon may penetrate. Our preaching should always be such as to encourage serious listeners to ask such questions as may be secretly engaging their thoughts. The scribe was evidently clearer-minded and more earnest than either the Herodians or the Sadducees. The Herodians put a political question, the Sadducees proposed a speculative question; but the scribe made a profound and spiritual inquiry, "Which is the first command-

ment of all?" This is the kind of question which is worthy of the most anxious consideration. Life should not be spent in paltry disputes about tribute money, or in studying questions of barren speculation, but in finding out the principles which are at the very centre of things and shall abide for ever.

Jesus Christ answered the scribe in the scribe's own spirit—a spirit of the deepest solemnity and veneration. The words of the commandments as pronounced by Jesus Christ are simply majestic. Without exposition, paraphrase, or enlargement, Jesus Christ repeated the words of eternal life. There is a scriptural answer to every great spiritual question. He who returns answers in the words of Scripture will most satisfy the desire of every earnest heart. Jesus attempted no philosophical exposition of law, obligation, judgment, or any related subject; he pronounced the commandments with the authority of the Lawgiver. Man needs two commandments because his life has two aspects. The one aspect is upwards towards God, the other aspect is lateral towards society. Both commandments have a common root, viz., love. True love is a compound feeling. It is more than mere admiration, fancy, prejudice, or esteem based upon superficial qualities and attractions. It comprises the assent of the judgment, the approbation of the conscience, and the fervent sanction of the best feelings. We may reverence God without loving him. For our neighbour we may have admiration without affection. We are to try ourselves by the severity and comprehensiveness of the divine requirement.

The answer which the scribe returned to Jesus Christ shows that in the heart of man there is a voice which confirms the claim of God. "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth." We should speak so as to compel those who hear us to acknowledge that our word is true. We can do this by our tone as well as by our reasoning. The tone of the ministry is quite as important as its argument. A hard, dry, dogmatic method of stating the truth will repel: a solemn, sympathetic, tender tone will constrain and persuade. We lose half our power as ministers of Christ if we neglect to appeal to the spirit of man as itself the best witness of God. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." It is the highest prerogative of man to be able to distinguish the false from the true, and to

discover in the moral chaos of society the line of rectitude and order. Let ministers appeal to that prerogative, and they will put many to silence who are too obstinate to be convinced.

Jesus Christ recognises every particle of good that is in a man. He told the scribe that he was not far from the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ recognised good directions and tendencies, as well as successful results. We should tell men when they are setting themselves upon a right course, even though they may have gone but a few steps upon it. Encouragement is as food to the soul. Do not let us be afraid of telling any man that we see some good in him. Point it out rather, and urge him to persevere in the holy way, walking by the same rule, and minding the same thing. Men may be so told of their excellences as to abash and humble them, as well as so told as to encourage self-exaggeration. The scribe was a type of men who require a word of encouragement. They have great questions to ask, and already in their own hearts there is an answer to such questions, but they wish that answer to be pronounced by some outward authority that may come back upon themselves as a revelation and an appeal. There is much in our own hearts which we would be glad to hear other people say, for we could then rest upon it with a redoubled sense of security.

35. And Jesus answered, and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?

36. For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

37. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

This gives us some insight into one of Jesus Christ's methods of teaching. He raised great questions for discussion. He did not always stop to explain the difficulties which he suggested, but rather left them to create a healthful excitement in the minds of his hearers. Ministers are often urged to be simple in their preaching, and there is undoubted wisdom in the exhortation; at the same time we ought to take license from the example of Jesus Christ to propound inquiries, and suggest courses of thinking, which seem to lie somewhat afield from the line of simple gospel preaching. Every mind is the better for having some great theological question constantly before it. A sense of awe

comes over the traveller when he enters the primeval forest, stands within the shadow of inaccessible heights, or feels his loneliness in the midst of the great sea: there is something analogous to this in some departments of theological inquiry,—we are perplexed, awed, overwhelmed; and in many a scene we are constrained to exclaim, "How dreadful is this place!" Jesus Christ raised great scriptural questions. He went back to Moses, the prophets, the Psalms, and found in the whole range of inspired statement bases on which to ground inquiries relating to his own person and mediation. He found himself everywhere. How is it that some of us see so little of him in the great sanctuary of his own revelation?

Notwithstanding these great problems, "the common people heard him gladly." The common people know a great deal by sympathy, which they do not receive through the medium of their understanding. It is unwise to suppose that every word has to be broken up into simple meanings for the sake of the common people. They can read the countenance, they can understand the tone, they can interpret all the feeling which pervades Christian discourse; and whilst three parts of the statement may be perfectly simple in an intellectual point of view, they can enter with deep appreciation into those portions which are far-reaching and sublime.

38. And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,

39. And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:

40. Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

The Saviour here returns to the great practical line of his ministry. He who had just proposed a solemn theological inquiry, utters a word of caution regarding some of the men who were immediately around him. Every honest minister is called upon to point out the false men and the false influences which are in society. This is a part of our ministry in which many of us fail. Who is courageous enough to lay his hand upon the vices which are immediately before him, presented in some of the members of his own congregation, and to condemn them specifically and vehemently? No word is hard which is true.

To call a man a hypocrite because he has in some way disappointed or offended us is mere spite; but to call him a hypocrite when we know that such a term is deserved by his conduct is not to speak severely. We find in the Scriptures such words as vipers, hypocrites, whited walls, liars; and these words have no harshness in them: employed in passion or in ill-nature they would recoil upon the speaker, and constitute a charge against his judgment and honour; but employed righteously they justify themselves, and do their proper work in human speech. No man used hard words, commonly so-called, so specifically and tellingly as Jesus Christ; the danger is, that with less wisdom and less authority some of his followers may abuse the holiness of his example. Jesus Christ condemned persons as well as actions. There is a shallow policy which says, Condemn the sin, but let the sinner alone: this was not Jesus Christ's method; he pointed out the sinner, and openly set upon him the mark of his righteous disapprobation. Long clothing, salutations in the marketplaces, chief seats in the synagogues, uppermost rooms at feasts, did not hide from Jesus Christ the fact that men bearing sacred names were devouring widows' houses, and for a pretence making long prayers. So terrible in penetration and judgment is the word and gospel of God!

41. And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

42. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites which make a farthing.

43. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury:

44. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

A story without an equal in the whole history of human beneficence. It abounds in practical points. Take a few of them:—

(1) There is a treasury in the Church. Treasury may stand for all means of doing good: supporting the ministry; spreading the gospel; teaching the ignorant; visiting the sick, etc. Into this treasury some may cast money, some time, some influence, others may cast the whole of these. The treasury, taken in this large sense, is one severe test of the piety and consecration of the Church. The treasury is not spoken of here as if it were

an exceptional institution, or brought into occasional use. It was a permanent fact. It was part of temple-worship. So it must ever be. When the Church ceases to give it will cease to live.

(2) Jesus Christ himself presides over the treasury. He did so, virtually, in this case. This fact redeems the treasury from all sordid and vulgar associations. What we give we give not to this man or to that, but to Jesus Christ himself. This consideration turns the act of giving into a holy service. When a shilling is given to a poor man it is given to Jesus Christ; when money is given to any Christian object it is handed to the Saviour himself. Work from any lower action, and giving will become a vexation; work from this high level, and it will become a sacrifice of joy. Jesus Christ is the Treasurer of the Church. Every farthing, every cup of cold water, every gentle service, he puts down in his book. All human officers are but sub-treasurers and sub-secretaries: the Saviour holds everything in his own hand.

(3) To this treasury men are to give as God has prospered them. Uniform rates of gift are unnatural, unreasonable, and unjust. It is scandalous that the great merchant and his clerk should be asked to give the same amount to Christian service. Pew-rents, as defining the final line of giving, ought not to be known in the church. They may be tolerated as bearing upon certain fixed expenses, but as a channel of love and gratitude they are infinitely worse than ridiculous. Love is the only sufficient law of giving. What has God done for us? What have we benefited from his word, his providences, his manifold ministries? These questions will settle the measure of our gifts to the consecrated treasury.

(4) Jesus Christ pronounces judgment upon the gifts of men. He knew what the rich had given; he knew what the widow gave; he knew how much was left behind in the hands of the rich, and he knew that the widow had parted with her whole living. Our judgment, then, is with God. Mutual criticism loses all sting when we bring ourselves immediately to the divine bar. Nothing that we have ever done shall be forgotten! "God is not unrighteous to forget our work of faith and labour of love." The poor will not be lost sight of in the judgment. What if they who gave most in quantity gave least in quality?

Chapter xvi. 15.

"Preach the gospel to every creature."

A DIVINE COMMAND.

SO said Jesus Christ, according to the report given in the Gospel according to Mark. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Can we make these words more universal? Can we add another province to the sphere? Let us see:—"Go ye into all the world." Can you add one island to that geography—a little island? Can you? "And preach the gospel to every creature." Is there one left out—a little one, a black one? Say what omissions mark this census. Not one. Is this like Jesus? Was he always so big in thought, in love, in care? Was he never little, mean, economic, sparse, critical? Did he always keep house for the whole universe? What is the characteristic of Christ along this line of thinking? Is it not universality, inclusiveness, godliness? How many men did God make, and who made the rest? Where is there a man that shaped himself, called himself into existence, maintains an independent individuality and relation to things, comes and goes as he pleases? Where is that man? As at the first God's hand was upon all, so through and through all the story God's love is upon all, and Christ's dear Cross overshadows all, and Christ's infinite heart welcomes all. If there be anything contrary to this, then we are mocked; false words have been spoken to us, promises have been spoken to the ear and broken to the heart. Is this the God we can worship? Is he a trifler? Is he a verbal necromancer, saying one thing and meaning another, indulging in the *double entendre*; ambiguous, uncertain? or is he positive, definite, clear, plain, meaning just what we expect him to mean when we are told that he is Love?

"Preach the gospel to every creature." Then every creature needs it? What is Man? I have never seen him; you have never seen him. You have seen a man, you have not seen Man. Only God can see Man. Until we get thorough hold of that simple thought we shall make no progress in our Christian studies. We cannot know human nature, we cannot know Man, we have never seen Humanity. Humanity is the sum-total of innumerable details; it is the total form of infinite variations and combinations. We have seen a man and many men, but Man is a singular-plural, a contradiction in grammar, a glorious unity in thought. You have never seen vegetation. What is vegetation? You have seen your own little garden and the field adjoining, and you may have gone even further, and you may know a little about English vegetation; some may go still further, and know a little about American vegetation. These are nothing. Who has seen all the vine-lands, corn-lands, spice-lands, all the lands watched by the zodiacs, the angels, the stars? We are very curious about this. We have near London built a large glass house at great public expense, and we watch it scientifically, and write reports about it, and treasure it as a national blessing. We call the place Kew. Let us enter this great glass house. What are these wondrous leaves, plants, trees? They are all named classically, and labelled and registered and cared for; but in the tropics they are all weeds. They grow out of doors; there are far too many of them; they are a nuisance. What do you know about Man? You have built him a glass house in some cases, and said, This is Man. Nothing of the kind: this is a man; but he who is an aristocrat here is a plebeian over yonder. Ah, that over yonder, that new place, that unknown territory, that unsuspected province! At Kew we are treasuring all kinds of weeds: we know nothing about sum-totals, we have no wisdom; we have little facts and small entries and minute memoranda about parishes, provinces, districts, and what we call empires. Only God can see the globe at one glance. We must therefore go to revelation if we would know what Man is.

Hear this and blush—You have to be revealed to yourself. Until you know that you cannot make much out of Christ Jesus. He will not only be a mystery to you, but a mystery of darkness;

not only will he be a mystery, he will be a perplexity. I have to be told what I am. I think I know myself, yet myself I have never seen. I do not know which is myself. My name is Legion, for there are many of us, and all within is riot, tumult, shouting, noise, war, bitterness, strife, prayer, blasphemy, seeing of angels and devils. What is this? Who is it? Father-Maker, come and tell me all about myself; I do not know what I am: reveal me to myself. What impudence it is therefore, what sheer impertinence and perversion of cleverness for any man to arise and pretend to tell us what Man is! Human nature is matter of revelation. If there is a book which reveals God, that book will reveal Man. As Christians we accept the Bible in this regard. We have come to look upon it as a divine revelation, below the letter, above the letter, glorifying the letter, and otherwise making the letter an inconvenient convenience, but still independent of it, as we shall come to know when our education is further advanced. The Bible tells us a poor story about Man,—a most incredible story to man, because man does not want to believe it. It is very difficult to satisfy any man with his own biography. If you were to write your dearest friend's biography, he would wish, without saying so, that you had been a little more emphatic here, and a little more complimentary there, and without indulging at all in flattery you might have brought out three or four other points more vividly, so as to have thrown a softer glory upon his beautiful personality. This he would not say for the world. Man has great power of self-concealment, and still greater power of social concealment. It is therefore extremely difficult to satisfy any man with his biography. It is well, therefore, that he should be dead before his biography is written; the severest of all critics would be himself. So when man comes to read the Bible story of himself, he says, This cannot be true; this is evidently fanatical, suppositional, allegorical; this is a Jew's account, this is a perverted statement. Man,—why, I know what man is, quoth the critic. So impudent can man be, so bare-faced and shameless. Until we know every creature that ever lived, and every creature under every climate and under every civic, geographical, and celestial condition, we do not know Man, and we must accept a statement of man from a revelation.

We as Christians have accepted the Bible as God's revelation of himself and of humanity, and, accepting the Bible so, man stands before his Maker lost—lost. How dare you take the responsibility of denying this? Who are you? and what will you do for us if you are wrong? If we believe all your nonsense what will you do for us in the crisis-hour? Where will you be? What will be your address then? How many of us may call upon you? If you do not make a revelation you suggest one; if you do not issue a new revelation of the universe you take upon you a still greater responsibility in contradicting one which has been believed by the piety, the benevolence, the purity, and the heroism of ages. What is the Bible account of man? The heart is deceitful above all things: God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions. There is none righteous, no, not one. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. This is the Biblical account of humanity, and the Bible is a large book; it takes large views, suggests infinite conceptions, grapples with the mysteries and problems of the universe, it lets nothing alone; it is a heroic book. It is not content with walking round little questions, and making little remarks upon them; it deals with God, man, sin, sacrifice, atonement, reconciliation, spiritual ministry, conquered death, and entered heaven. This book reveals man as lost. Hear this sweet voice, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost,"—not some of it, not a little of it, not much of it, not most of it, but "that which was lost." If these words do not mean what they say, then we are—let me repeat, solemnly and reverently—mocked by an abuse of language. What is it that is to be preached to every creature? A new theory, a very intricate and most ingenious hypothesis about nothing? No. What then is "the gospel"? What does "gospel" mean? Good news, glad tidings, blessed intelligence, the most astounding and musical revelation of love ever addressed to the ear or the heart,—musical music; and what is it in words? No words can express it all, as no instrument can exhaust a musician's soul. But some of the words are these, As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him might be saved. God

so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us: he died the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God: he bare our sins in his own body on the tree: he shed his blood for the remission of sin: and he cries, Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Why, this is what we wanted; somebody has dreamed or invented the very thing man most needs. If this is not a dream, an invention, it is what it professes to be, a revelation of the infinite Heart, a declaration of the ineffable, inexhaustible Love.

How do we stand in relation to it, then? We have either believed it, or we have not believed it. We cannot take up a neutral position, and say we have nothing to do with it. That is impossible. No man can so treat the sunlight. If a man shall be charged with doing something that is contrary to the laws of life, society will not allow him to say, There may be a sun, but I really maintain a totally neutral position in relation to it; I do not regard it, I do not look to it at all. Society would call him fool, and put him down; and if he had done anything wrong society would lock him up and punish him. Society will not allow a man to be so indifferent to the light as to commit a crime when he might have left it undone. You cannot maintain a neutral or negative position in relation to the Cross. Christ, as a matter of history, has died, has sent forth his ministers, has declared his gospel, has opened his heart-door, has breathed upon every one the welcomes of his love; so you cannot say you will take no heed of it, but will receive destiny as it comes. You do not act so in other matters: why do you lay down and abandon your common-sense when you come to face the deepest and most solemn questions of life? I believe every man may be saved. I have not a gospel given to me which reads, Give every creature a hearty welcome; but I will take care that there is only room for a few. Go into all the world, and tell everybody he may come; but when he is half a mile off I will take care that he falls into a pit and cannot come. My gospel does not preach so; my gospel is a gospel of love, entreaty, of universality. It says to the very worst man, You may come. It says to the

thief upon the cross, already half in hell, There is still time for saving prayer. "Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel!" This is what we need. We may not feel our need of it at some particular moment, but there are other moments in our life when we must have it all, and when we say to our friends, "Tell me the old, old story of Jesus and his love!" Then we become little children again, broken-hearted men. And God never loves us so much as when we are of a broken and a contrite spirit.

NOTE.

The following list of references to the Old Testament is nearly or quite complete:—

Mark i. 2.	Mal. iii. 1.
„ 3.	Is. xl. 3.
„ 44.	Lev. xiv. 2.
ii. 25.	1 Sam. xxi. 6.
iv. 12.	Is. v. 10.
vii. 6.	Is. xxix. 13.
„ 10.	Ex. xx. 12; xxi. 17.
ix. 44.	Is. lxvi. 24.
x. 4.	Deut. xxiv. 1.
„ 7.	Gen. ii. 24.
„ 19.	Ex. xx. 12-17.
xi. 17.	Is. lvi. 7; Jer. vii. 11.
Mark xii. 10.	Ps. cxviii. 22.
„ 19.	Deut. xxv. 5.
„ 26.	Ex. iii. 6.
„ 29.	Deut. vi. 4.
„ 31.	Lev. xix. 18.
„ 36.	Ps. cx. 1.
xiii. 14.	Dan. ix. 27.
24.	Is. xiii. 10.
xiv. 27.	Zech. xiii. 7.
„ 62.	Dan. vii. 13.
xv. 28(?)	Is. liii. 12.
„ 34.	Ps. xxii. 1.

"Though this Gospel has little historical matter which is not shared with some other, it would be a great error to suppose that the voice of Mark could have been silenced without injury to the divine harmony. The minute painting of the scenes in which the Lord took part, the fresh and lively mode of the narration, the very absence of the precious discourses of Jesus, which, interposed between his deeds, would have delayed the action, all give to this Gospel a character of its own. It is the history of the war of Jesus against sin and evil in the world during the time that he dwelt as a Man among men. Its motto might well be, as Lange observes, those words of Peter: 'How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him' (Acts x. 38). It developes a series of acts of this conflict, broken by times of rest and refreshing, in the wilderness or on the mountain. It records the exploits of the Son of God in the war against Satan, and the retirement in which after each he returned to commune with his Father, and bring back fresh strength for new encounters."—SMITH'S *Dictionary of the Bible*.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE.

Chapter ii. 11.

"Unto you is born this day . . . a Saviour."

THE WORLD'S NEED.

THIS is just what the world wanted. This is just what the world always wants. The world wants this not the less that it is in some instances not aware of the necessity. What does a drowning man want? A lecture on natation? That would be exceedingly profitable to a man who was drowning! Tell him how to use his right arm, and his left, and his lower limbs; remark on the gracefulness of his action. All this would be exceedingly gratifying to a man who is struggling for life. You would not mock a drowning man; you are not cruel enough for that. What does the drowning man want? A strong grip: no reasoning; let him be reasoned with by-and-by; let him work his way into the metaphysics of the occasion when he has leisure. First of all get him out, and bring him into safety. Everything depends upon our circumstances as to what religion we want. If we are members of Parliament, with an abundance of leisure on our hands, and with some little capital that will enable us to publish agnostic pamphlets, and to give them away, we shall not want a religion of agony. There need be no Cross in that relation; a little scented water, a few difficult sentences written on gilt-edged paper would be very admirable, and would have about them some hint of the higher æstheticism; but men and women such as we meet any day in coming to church.—the peeps we have had

into slums and alleys and back places, into which civilisation dare hardly go; poor, poor women trying to snatch a moment's sleep in some little off-hand alley, with the inevitable black shawl around their unkempt heads,—what do they want? By-and-by they may become metaphysicians and philosophers, and even agnostics; I cannot tell what they may become in two millenniums: but now, this moment, they want a "Saviour." If Christ the Lord will not do, get up some other man; but do get a Saviour. We do not want you to be finding fault with one Saviour if you can get another. Why hold a controversy on the shore when one of you should plunge into the sea and save the drowning man? Jesus Christ is willing to stand aside if you can supersede him by one more excellent, by one mightier, by one of larger heart. When did he ever usurp the first place arbitrarily? Even his enemies said that the works which he did gave him a right to the primacy. He wants to hold the primacy on no other terms. If any man can save the soul more completely and beneficently, Jesus Christ would be willing to let that man go forward and perform this sublimest miracle. They take a mean course—selfish, dishonourable, inhuman—who simply say Christ is not the Lord. He is willing to be displaced if you can bring forward any man who will do a deeper, truer, larger, nobler work.

"Unto you is born this day . . . a Saviour." The world did not want an adviser. The world had advised itself almost into hell. The world did not ask for a speculator. Everything that man could do had been done, and men sat in the darkness of their own wisdom. The world did not want a reformer, a man who could change his outward and transient relations, an engineer that would continually devote his time (for appropriate remuneration) to the readjustment of the wheels and the pulleys and the various mechanical forces of society. The world wanted a Saviour. "Saviour" is a pathetic name. It is not an official title; it is not an image you could robe in scarlet, and bow down before on account of its majesty and haughtiness; "Saviour" is an angel with tears in his eyes; arms mighty as the lightnings of God, but a heart all tenderness. "Saviour" is a complex word. It has in it all human nature, all divine nature, all the past of history, all the possibility of prophecy, all the mystery of apocalypse; the

tenderness outvying the love of women, the majesty humbling the haughtiness of kings.

Suppose we take the world apart altogether from religious definition and description; suppose for the time being we set aside the term "sin," and look at the world concretely, exactly, as it then presented itself to the eyes of an earnest observer, what kind of world was it? Men were hostile to one another. That is an undeniable fact. A spirit of enmity was the spirit of such civilisation as there was, rude or elaborate:—Who could be uppermost, who could rule, who could plunder and overwhelm and destroy? That was the aspect presented by one large section of the world. If there was another section apparently refined and cultivated, it was a section that had refined itself into weariness, and cultivated itself to surfeit. On the other hand, it was a world given over to daily and unaccountable suffering. Account for it as we may, there is the suffering world before our eyes day by day. Every heart knows its own bitterness. Life cannot throw off its load. When we laugh we are sad; if for a moment we make holiday, and endeavour by legitimate friction to excite one another into merriment, we hear a whispering full of trouble; there is a noise in the heart that will not be stilled. Where there can be no distinct trace of suffering to actual or positive disobedience or infraction of divine law, still there it is; the child is dying, the heart is breaking, the home is violated by invisible but mighty enemies; there is a canker even in the purse, there is rust on the gold, so that men take it out and look at it, and wonder if they may accept it, or whether they shall arrest us as dealers in base coin; heaven at its bluest has streaks in it that may at any time come together and constitute a storm. This is the world; what will you do with it? What does that kind of world want? It wants a "Saviour." If any man has dreamed himself to be the Saviour of the world, he should be welcomed; by so much as he has dreamed of possible salvation he will do good, he will be gentle, he will be sacrificial; in the degree in which he earnestly says, "I want to save the world," he may be trusted, be he Greek, or Roman, or Jew. Jesus Christ came and proposed to save the world. Whatever we may say for Christianity or against it, there is the fact that Christianity sought to put down

hostility by the creation of brotherhood; and, on the other hand, Christianity sought to mitigate human suffering, even when it could not be wholly removed, by sanctifying it, by turning it to the highest practical uses. Christianity addresses itself not to sections of the world, little classes and coteries of philosophers and speculators, but to the heart of the world—the heart that is broken, the soul that is in agony, the life that has given up the last hope of self-salvation. It is a bold religion; it is a noble, glorious proposal.

I have just read a pamphlet entitled "A Friendly Correspondence with Mr. Gladstone about Creeds," by Samuel Laing. Mr. Gladstone wrote to Mr. Laing—an eminent controversialist, and a thorough-going student, and a gentleman in controversy—asking Mr. Laing to state the negative points in series, that he might have some conception of the new position to which the later religious thought would call the world. Mr. Laing replies, and in the course of his first letter he says, "But we are not an aggressive or proselytising race. . . . In fact, we prefer to wait." Christianity does not. Christianity will not wait a moment. Christianity says, The people are dying. Wait? By what authority? Verily here is a popish assumption. Here are men who are proposing to wait! Christianity separates itself from such men by instantaneous, urgent, passionate, tremendous earnestness. It may be wrong, but it is sincere. "We are not an aggressive or proselytising race." But Christianity is. Christianity is nothing if not aggressive. Meet Christianity where you like, and its arms are out for battle or for salvation, and its voice is lifted up saying, "Come now, let us reason together." Behold, here is a new leisure that baptises itself, and names itself "non-aggressive." Let us lie down now a little on the other side, and let the world go its own gate: we are not aggressive or proselytising. If you like to have that religion you can have it. But, Mr. Gladstone says, let us have your propositions as it were in the form of an indictment; state them in consecutive order and enumeration. Mr. Laing begins the first article. You will have a difficulty in making out thirty-nine articles—he begins with one:—"That the subjects which positive creeds profess to define are, for the most part, unknowable,—*i.e.*, beyond the scope of human reason or

conception. Whose human reason? Whose human conception? Verily, here is authority with a vengeance! Here is one man who stands up to speak in the name of human reason and human conception! These are the men who dislike authority in the Church, and dislike dogmatism in the pulpit, and who are so extremely modest that they would only speak each for himself, except when under extraordinary and uncontrollable pressure one of them ventures to speak in the name of human reason. Archbishops and bishops, pastors, ministers, and professors of every name, close your books! Here is a man who speaks in the name of human reason.

Suppose we treated social questions in this way, what would be said about us? Let us talk thus:—Human sorrow, human suffering, human poverty, is so vast, and the whole question is so complicated, that it is simply impossible for human reason to grasp it, or human conception to evolve a new scheme of social philosophy—call me to-morrow as late as you can. Christianity says, If we cannot do everything we must do something; we must begin to-day; to-morrow the people may be dead.

Having perused this pamphlet, I am struck with several things about it. There are here propositions in italics. It does not require any great genius to be a proposition-maker. This pamphlet might have announced itself as indicating a "Proposition-formulating manufactory: propositions formulated here on the shortest notice, and on moderate terms." The formulation of propositions makes no difference in this great agony of human life, this tremendous struggle of human progress. Suppose we should describe household economy as some of these able writers describe the Christian idea. Would you be satisfied to have household life described by things that are external? Suppose I were called upon for a definition of household life, and I should give it in a series of propositions or descriptions—thus: First, rent; secondly, rates and taxes; thirdly, weekly bills; fourthly, fifthly, and sixthly, highway arrangements, police arrangements, general relations to the people round about;—that is household life. Is it? No, no. The household life is inside—in the birth, the death, the suffering, the joy, the mutual trust,

the common honour; household life is in the mingling of tears and laughter, in the exchange of hearts, in copartnery of sorrow; these are not things that will submit to be set in propositions and printed in italics; they must be lived, they must be experienced to be known. So when men talk about the Christian religion, indicating its creeds, its metaphysics, its ecclesiastical organisations, and all the rest of such environment or accompaniment, we say, That is not all: the Christian religion is within, is to be found at a place called Calvary; it is in Bethlehem, it is in Gethsemane, it is in Golgotha, it is on Olivet, it is on the eternal throne. You have not settled the claims of Christianity when you have disputed with the highest scholarly authorities that are arrayed on the side of Christian defence. He only understands Christianity who has felt it. No other man has a right to speak about it. Christianity is not a proposition to be discussed, it is a gospel to be received.

Reading this pamphlet through, I find it wholly destitute of moral enthusiasm. There is no passion here; there is not a tear in the whole argument. There is nothing in that paper that says, I want to help the race. There is, however, some degree of consolation even in this manifesto. That consolation you will find in Article 8—"Polarity is the great underlying law of all knowable phenomena." What does a man want more than that? It seems to be a respectable word, and to convey nothing by way of mischievous implication; at the same time it does not speak to me in my sorrow; it plants no flower on the grave; it does not turn my crust of bread into sacramental flesh as I eat it through lips that have burned with prayer. This may be the way to progress and liberty, purity and nobleness, but I cannot think it is. Sirs, I would see Jesus! He knows me better than any one else. His words drop as the small rain, and as the gentle dew and the healing balm: I want him; he is my Saviour.

A great injustice may be inflicted upon Christianity by attempting unduly to intellectualise it. Christianity has suffered from the human intellect. Men would be clever where cleverness was a sin. Men have no business to write creeds. That is where the Church has been disloyal to the Cross. The Cross cannot be

formulated in propositions and articles and items, to be received, accepted, signed, and held for ever in certain cast-iron human forms. You have no right to a creed that is of the nature of finality. If you choose to regard it as marking a stage in holy progress, so be it; if you submit some statement of faith as indicating how far Christian thought has advanced, that may be done with great utility; but if you set up a creed and say, This is final, this is the only way to heaven, this is orthodoxy; if you do not accept this you cannot have fellowship with God through Christ,—then you are telling lies in the sanctuary. Suppose we are going to the North, and we have arrived as far as Barnet, and I say, I must just put down two or three things as to our position:—Barnet: nice-looking country; nothing romantic, still a place that a man might live in if he had the means of doing so; moderate climate; partially wooded; some nice views here, no doubt, at certain periods of the year: that is where we are; that is our creed. So it is. The great express rolls on for two hours, and we say, Where are we? Where are we! We settled that long ago; I told you where we are—Barnet. Why do you raise these questions now? I raise them because the train has been going on; that is all. And so the great progress of the age advances. We are not always at Barnet; we are not always at the old outworn creed. The faith that is in the creed may be just the same, but it requires new expression, new incarnation, new adaptation to new circumstances. It is the creed we have abandoned; we still, blessed be God, grasp and love the faith. In Christian inquiry always suspect the intellect; not in any bad sense, but in the sense of vigilant caution. Men are victimised by their own sagacity; men are led into extremes by their own vanity and their own cleverness. A clever religion is a bad religion.

I speak to some whose life-duty it is to represent Christian thought in its latest forms and in its best aspects. Using that function in the spirit of Christ, they may confer inestimable advantage upon the Church and upon the world; but if they say, This is all, this is the beginning and the end; my form is the only possible form, I speak in the name of human reason and human conception: this is the whole mystery of God,—believe

them not; they are hirelings and not shepherds. That is the worst kind of popery; it is the popery that is not surrounded by the dignity of a historic sentiment, it is the popery of personal vanity and ignorance. What then is to be trusted in this great religious pursuit? The heart. What do you mean by the heart? I mean three things—I mean purity of motive, I mean tenderness of feeling, I mean self-crucifixion. In the Scriptures the heart is often used as a convertible term with mind and intellect; that we perfectly well know; but there is also a sense in which the heart separates itself, and becomes motive, emotion, sacrifice; a Christ-like passion and agency, dominating, sublimating, glorifying the whole life. We shall never have unity of opinion. We have no unity of opinion in business, we have no unity of opinion in architecture, we have no unity of opinion even in politics, we have no unity of opinion in art; but does this divergence of opinion split up society and endanger the altar, and bring the throne into peril? Men may be patriots, to whatever political party they belong. Patriotism is not the birthright or the heritage of any one party in the State; it touches a common sentiment, and there are moments when men throw down their party flags, and lift up the national banner, and are proud of their country's name. So with this great Christian thought and action. Blessed be God, there come moments when we forget whether we are Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Baptists, or Presbyterians, or Wesleyan Methodists; for the moment we forget all that is little, partial, and individual, and a common impulse drives us forward in the arms of trust, brotherhood, and generous comradeship, that we may proclaim a common salvation, and declare to all men everywhere—"Unto you this day is born . . . a Saviour." Ministers, that is your gospel. God give you and me grace to preach it. Believers, that is your gospel. Do not you be making your little mechanical creeds and orthodox contrivances and small ecclesiastical gateways. Let all men feel that the Church is not a debating club, is not even an academy formed for the higher disputes of metaphysics and philosophy. Let not the world get the impression that only scholars can find their way to the Cross. Oh, outcast, ignorant, blind, there is one traveller that can find his way to the Cross. What is his name? The Broken Heart.

PRAYER.

Come to us, Lord, in thine own way, and according to thine own measure; only delay not, but come quickly! We live when God is with us; without God we cannot live. We pray thee, therefore, at the Cross of our Saviour, to come; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, dwell with us, break bread to us, reveal thyself to us, and give us a perpetual blessing. We rejoice when we see God; it is like seeing the morning light, the summer glory, the noonday in all its cloudlessness. Say to our souls that have been mourning thine absence, The winter is over and gone, and the time of the singing of birds is come. May the birds of heaven make their nests in our hearts, and sing to us songs of the summerland. We bless thee if our hunger has led us to thy table, then the hunger was sent from God; we rejoice if our thirst has brought us to the right fountain, then was our thirst no accident, but part of God's leading and education of the soul. We rejoice that in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare; and as for the river of God, it is full of water. Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, after love and beauty and purity, and divinest fulness of thought and life, for they shall be filled. Giving doth not impoverish God; withholding doth not enrich the Lord. Thou hast been giving unto us with both hands since we were born; thy right hand has been opened in power, and thy left hand in succour and tenderness. We have nothing that we have not received; it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; we are the children of compassion, we are spared by the tears of God. We rejoice that all this highest thought of our souls takes us to Calvary. The Cross is the river of God, the fountain of joy, the beginning of immortality; yea, in it we see all figures and emblems signifying purity through pardon and peace, through righteousness, and bringing us into closer alliance with the living God. We would live on Calvary; we would build our house near the Cross. We can only live in mercy, for we are inclined to sin every moment; our prayer is but occasional, our sin is permanent. Yet we have hope in God through Christ; the Cross was not set up in vain, the Lord cannot be foiled in battle. Thou dost mean to save this little world, every man, woman, and young child in it; thou wilt lose no lamb from the flock. We leave it all with thee, only give us the answering heart when thou dost send to us the appeals of thy grace. Make us great in goodness; may we be strong and valiant in modest courage; may we derive all our strength from God; then shall our weakness be strength, and our extremity shall be God's opportunity. Help us to be better men, in innermost thought, in nobleness of aspiration; make us eloquent in secret wordless prayer; may we commune with God all day, all night, then the morning shall give us a baptism of dew, and the day shall be succeeded by no gloom or darkness of night. Holy Spirit, dwell with us;

come down out of heaven upon us, and abide upon our shattered lives, a new hope, a new defence, an inextinguishable glory. Rebuke us, but in mercy; let not thy rod smite us in all its scourging power, for which of the sons of flesh hath strength enough to stand against the scourge of God? We own our sins; we do not get rid of them by confessing them, but if we confess, thou art faithful and just to forgive, and thus by the divine act we have release from the guilt and the torment of sin. Behold how we have wasted our prosperity; we have written our own name upon it, and we have swollen ourselves with pride in the presence of the poverty that has fallen at our feet, and we have said to ourselves, Behold, we are not as other men. We have not been kind to the point of nobleness; we have given nothing, we have kept all we could, and therefore nothing has been given. If anything has been parted with, it has been forced out of us by shame, by social pressure; we would have kept it, every crumb and farthing, if we could. So we are before God as criminals: give us to know that we are pardoned by feeling that we can do the wrong no more. Wherein any have been just and generous and good, beneficent and useful, they desire to trace all to the action of the Holy Ghost. Not unto us, not unto us, say they, but unto God's name be all the glory. We think of our loved ones at home, and far away, specially those who are weakened by pain, who have not been able to do their day's work, and therefore have lost their day's bread. We think of the weary, and the sad, and of those who are saying, Is this never to end? is the darkness always to deepen, and is the wind always to be filled with the sound of nearing wolves? Oh, the heartache! Oh, the world's great misery! Saviour of the world, is it our impatience that prays or our faith, when we say, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Amen.

Chapter iii. 22.

"And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him.'

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

IT is that "bodily shape" that creates all the difficulty in some lumbering and wooden minds. How to connect spirit and body is the profound and insoluble problem. Some persons can believe in matter; they think they see it. Others have a dim notion of the possibility of there being a force in creation that might be called Mind or Spirit. But how to connect the two, how to get the Holy Ghost into a bodily shape,—that is the puzzle, the problem, the impossibility. Yet that connection is plainly declared in this text if words have any meaning. The terms are very explicit and vivid: "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove." In that event the problem would seem to be solved; solved by illustration, it not by exposition.

The whole Trinity is here. Let us count the persons indicated in this twenty-second verse: "And the Holy Ghost"—that is one—"descended upon him"—that is another—"and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son"—that is a third. Here is the threefold action of a threefold Personality: the descending Holy Ghost, the baptised Christ, the approving Father. We cannot get away from the Trinity unless we get away from the Bible. It is not necessary that we should explain it, or understand it, or have even the dimmest conception of its possibility. Some things we are bound to accept without handling. A man might handle the earth, but he cannot lay his fingers on the sky. All things do not come into possession through pen and ink, or through a process of handling and counting. All the greatest blessings we enjoy come without explanation of p human kind; yet their coming is indisputable; yea, their coming marks the vital point of the day and the vital point of all destiny. We only know God when he puts himself into relation. He must be in the dove, or in the man, or in some shape, before we can know fully and impressively that he is, and that he is near. We have no mental room for the Infinite; we lack space for that accommodation: but when God puts himself into visible shape, when he comes to us in the person of his Son, we see him through that living medium. We shall miss the true point of the Incarnation if we stop only at the bodily or physical appearance and presence of Christ. All things physical are emblematical. All stars are but an index. They are not the text, they are not the body of the poem; they mark its lines: the poem is spiritual, metaphysical, wordless, and it comes to us through any medium that we can best appreciate or comprehend. God must become man before we can know him with any sense that warms the heart, enlarges the understanding, and brightens the outlook of the mind.

We shall have to face one difficulty, and that is the difficulty that some persons can only think of one bodily shape. But all bodily shapes are available to God. "Body" becomes quite a large term when God interprets it and utilises it. In the text it was the bodily shape of a bird. It seems to us sometimes as if some birds required but a touch from heaven to turn them into

angels; they have such beauty, such voices, and they are altogether marked by such qualities that it would be easy to some minds to conceive that a mere breath from the mouth of God might transform them into celestial visitants. They are more than birds. Not to the bird-fancier, the bird-dealer, but to the man who listens to the gospel poured out of their throats. In the text the bodily shape was that of a dove, so soft, so beautiful, so gentle, so emblematic of peace and serenity. God chooses his mediums and his instruments, and whatsoever they may be when he takes them up for his use, they all become beautiful by his habitation of them.

Are we willing that this descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove should be simply a point in ancient history? Are we still reluctant to give modern enlargements and interpretations to the spiritual ministry of God in his own creation? The truth is, that the Holy Ghost is coming down always in bodily shape; only we deprive ourselves of celestial visions by talking about the New Testament as a book a thousand years old and more; whereas we should accept it as an indicator, as a book pointing to events that are now taking place, to descents which are the true creators and sanctifiers of human history. The Holy Ghost sometimes descends upon us in the form of a little child. All the little children are heavenward-bound. No one ever went to hell out of a cradle. "Suffer the little children to come unto me," said he who was man, woman, and child in one; "for of such is the kingdom of heaven." When the disciples would inquire as to ecclesiastical status, and especially with regard to ecclesiastical primacy, saying, "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus took a little child, and said, "He is." There is nothing greater in heaven than the child-heart. All the rest is decoration; all the rest is of the nature of embroidery, fringe, accident, detail. Heaven is childness. Yet we are prone to think of the child as another element in statistical inquiry. We call him part of the population, and allow the little wave to fall into the great sea without special reckoning and individuality and care and love, speaking for the bulk of mankind. Yet that child is the Holy Ghost in bodily shape. You could see it if you looked well into the eyes; you could hear it if you

listened to the mighty throb of that weakness. Why let things pass by you without catching their apocalyptic meaning, their highest references? Why live in dry, dull, bare commonplace, when you might be living in a continually opening heaven?

Sometimes the Holy Ghost descends upon us in bodily shape in the form of a man, a great teacher, a great prophet. Who is the great prophet? Not the fortune-teller; the after-teller is the real prophet. Any mind of an audacious turn can make a bold dash at the future; but he is the real prophet who post-tells, who reads you the writing of moss and lichen on the old wall, who takes you down to the rocks, and reads you all the stony eloquence millions of ages old. Sometimes the man is not only a prophet, but he is a reformer. He says, This is out of square, this is not plumb; here geometry has been violated; there the foundations are out of course. He has an uneasy time of it. No man likes to be told where he is wrong. It is in human nature, whilst protesting modesty, to be drinking in whole rivers of flattery. We are liars. Why not see God in man? Why not know fully and graciously that humanity is God's dwelling-house, and that the poorest, meanest cripple that halts from one step to another is part of the mystic building? Why keep your theology in a book two thousand, five thousand, years old, when you might have it newly written for you according to the old pattern every morning in every life? Until we realise these great conceptions of childhood and manhood we shall not begin the right work of education, reform, or progress. So long as the metaphysic is wrong the concrete must be false. Wrap nothing up; let us have no veneer and covering and bandaging. We are wrong until the heart is right.

Sometimes the Holy Ghost descends in the bodily shape of events, and how have events been treated by modern men? As wholly secular. If the pulpit so much as referred to them, it would lose its dignity. We have made a special department in life of the treatment of events, and we have taken care that the Church shall have nothing to do with them, the pulpit shall ignore them; whereas these events are divine incarnations, writings of human history, the things that ought to constitute the

texts of the pulpit. But the pulpit will not have it so, and therefore the pulpit is becoming effete. We leave events to the newspaper; we leave events to the fireside; we leave events to constitute the investments of liars and persons who act from sinister motives, as well as to persons who do their very honest best to interpret them in their largest and truest sense. But who can instruct the Church? Who can make the Church other than the most grievous, blind, halt, maimed old grandmother? Who can waken up any preacher to read the events of the day? Yet there is God in every one of them; here rebuking, there approving, yonder shaping, and over the whole adjusting, balancing, weighing, and working them out to holy and blessed issues.

Here, then, we come face to face with the perpetual Incarnation, the daily, unceasing descent of the Holy Ghost. Yet we cannot get men to believe these things. They will believe whatever was written two thousand years ago. Man loves antiquity; he loves superstition; he loves the anonymous. That man rightly interprets God who sees him in the precious inspired Scriptures, the beginnings of things, the outline and the symbol of ever-evolutionising history. We might have had a stronger faith if we had been more wise and pious in our treatment of the things that are happening round about us every day.

Descent—descending from heaven. The earth needs the heavens. The old earth wants something which it has not got. Its very weeds want to be paradises. Its beginnings are full of pain, and the cry of the earth is, When will it come—the light, the morning, the joy? I cannot thus be left alone, I was not meant to be solitary; I am part of something else: where is that something? what is it? when will it come? Oh, nameless Force, descend upon me! Let the heavens withdraw from the earth, and what is it? An ice-heap. Let the heavens come to the earth, and what is it? A garden. Children run out to play in the sunshine, not knowing in words, but feeling in soul, that heaven is come down to make holiday for them. The sun governs all things. As we have often had occasion to say, the sun is your tailor, the sun is your house-builder, the sun spreads your table. You did not know it, but then you did not know

God. The earth needs the descending heavens, in warmth, in growth, in comfort. Man needs the descending heavens in sympathy, in special inspirations, in particular and immediate qualification for the discharge of solemn trusts. Sometimes a man may not awaken until the finger of God touches his eyelids. Sometimes, having awakened out of the physical sleep, he shrinks from the age he lives in; it is so crooked, so tortuous, so perverse, so loath to listen to anything of the nature of purity, righteousness, and noble exhortation; and he cannot go out to his duty until the Holy Ghost descends upon him; then he is a thousand legions, then he will never strike his battle-flag until the victory be won.

Some men are more spirit-gifted than others. Some men have hardly begun their manhood. They are dealers of a low type. The true business man is a truly inspired man, just as much so as any prophet, according to the level he lives upon. But some men are mere hucksters; it is give and take. I do not call them business men. I hold that the title "business men" means education, sagacity, statesmanship, power of arrangement and adjustment and government. There are some men who have not begun to be. They have never prayed; they cannot sing. All beauty is wasted upon them; the gilt is gilt, not gold; the colour is a violation of whiteness, a staring challenge to dull eyes; not symbolism, not poetry, blushing before their very sight. They are animals. Never take the clue of your life from them. They will always tell you how not to do a thing; they will chill you like icebergs. Other men have hardly any body; they are all soul, all spirit, all sensitiveness. They feel that a thing is coming; they know it is in the air; they see it in flashes of the face, in kindlings of the eyes; they know it by the tips of the fingers of those who touch them. Man is not one and the same; he requires definition, according to personality and environment. Some men have fire, genius, sight; it is a great gift of God; it is the pledge and seal that the Holy Ghost has descended out of heaven upon them, and that they are approved by the Father, ruling all the household of mankind. We should hail such men; we may not understand what they are talking about, but we feel that they have brought with them fragrance

from an upper garden. They may often bewilder us, but we feel that the very bewilderment is part of a higher education; it lifts us up, it never drags us down. Christ was full of the Holy Ghost. In him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. It was in his cloak. Said one, "If I may but touch the hem of his garment I shall be made whole." It was in Christ's hands. Oh those wondrous hands! We shall one day come to believe more in manual healing. One day the true healing will be in the true touch. There is healing in some hands; they are mother's hands, they bring us nearer to the heart, they talk masonically. Christ's hands have healing in them. "He laid his hands upon him"; and as for the children, he laid his hands upon them and blessed them. It was in his voice. Some men who went to arrest him said, We could not touch that man: never man spake like this man. On another occasion, all the people wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his lips. They were old words, but never so spoken; the words had been written upon the scroll until the ink had become yellow with age; but uttered by Jesus they were new words, syllables of fire, glints of light. We might have more light. Jesus came to give us life, and to give it to us more abundantly, like wave on wave, so that we not only breathe, but fly, and burn, and go upward to meet our kindred in the skies.

Christ's spirit, or genius, or divinity, was in his Beatitudes. He blessed whom none had blessed before. Other men had been blessing riches and honours, crowns and thrones, and glories of many kinds and degrees; but Jesus blesses the poor in spirit, and the meek, and the merciful, and raises them all to heaven. The Deity of Christ was in his welcomes. Were ever such welcomes breathed? Broad as the firmament, generous as the all-inspiring air. Read his welcomes if you would take the measure of his soul. Yet at last he was forsaken. Said he, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" That only the body might be killed; that only the flesh might be dishonoured in the final blasphemy. Was he forsaken? Say, is the sun forsaken when for a moment he is eclipsed. Not a beam of him has been shorn. His centre has not been changed. He is still the sun. The eclipse will pass. The sun will abide.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, help us to hear all thy truth. Give us the hearing ear, the understanding heart, lest we reject any portion of the counsel of heaven. Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. We want to hear every tone of thy voice. Not one word of thine would we allow to fall to the ground. We want to hear thy commandments. The thunder and the lightning and the great earthquake shall not keep us back from the commandments of God. We want to hear thy beatitude, thou lovely One, fairest among ten thousand, whose voice is music, whose eyes are morning. We would hear the commandments and the beatitude, the great law and the tender benedictions. We would keep company with the prophets and with the minstrels, and with the apostles and with the evangelists. We would hear all their utterances, and treasure them in our hearts as revelations from heaven. Forgive us wherein we have neglected one portion of thy Word, or cultivated one at the expense of another. We have lost the proportion of faith; we have heeded not the balance of thought; we have not known all the way and all the counsel of God. Dost thou not speak in great thunder, and hast thou not also a still small voice? Are not thine the torrents and the cataracts, and are not thine also the rills and the streams that make glad the city of God? The Lord give us fearlessness of soul that we may pursue our quest after truth amid all dangers, difficulties and perils, and when the voice is harsh and terrible may we still listen to it, for in the judgments of God there is no want of music. Find a way for thyself into our hearts; abide in our judgment and in our conscience; accept the sovereignty of our will. These prayers will be prevalent because we baptise them with the blood of atonement. We offer them all at the altar of the Cross, we make them mighty in the name that is above every name, in which name the universe evermore bows its knee before God. Amen.

Chapter iv. 28, 29.

"When they heard these things, they were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong."

EXCITING SERMONS.

ARE there any such perorations in connection with the pulpit eloquence of this day? The preacher retires amid thunders of applause, or amid tepid compliments, or without recognition, or with more or less of well-calculated or ill-calculated criticism.

But when does a congregation ever rise up, and, filled with wrath, seize the minister, lead him to the brow of the hill, and threaten to cast him headlong from the eminences of the city? Never! We have fallen upon other times. Hear the trumpery criticism of this day:—The sermon was so quiet, so delightfully quiet; the preacher was so pleasant, so tranquil, so composed; he never betrayed the faintest excitement. Or, hear it again in another form:—The sermon was so comforting, soothing, healing; there was balm in it; the preacher was a son of consolation: how richly he dwelt upon the divine promises! how aptly and happily he applied them to human necessity! There is room for all that kind of preaching. It is not a kind of preaching in either case to be despised or held in light esteem. Sometimes we need quietness, oftentimes we need healing. The broken-hearted are the majority in every congregation, if they knew themselves. We need the balm that is in Gilead, and we need no other physician but the One that is there. All that is true; create space for such ministry, for we need it all.

But where is the other kind of eloquence? It must be the right kind in some instances, at least, because it is associated in this text with the name of Jesus Christ. This was not some wandering speaker who had gone forth without licence or authority, or without adequate cause, and had aroused popular passions, or excited religious hatred. The speaker was the Son of God, he who spake as never man spake: and yet when he had uttered a few words, to us apparently so simple and so inoffensive, the whole congregation rose up in a mass, being filled with wrath, and led him forth to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

There should be room for that ministry as well as the other. We do not like it. Therefore, perhaps, we need it the more. We would rather not be disturbed. We have disturbance enough in business and in politics. When we go to the sanctuary we want to hear something to soothe us, and lull us, and comfort us. That is bad reasoning. When we go to the sanctuary we should go for truth. Sometimes truth will be like a child-angel, so sweet, so tender, so familiar, so domestic, so necessary to the completeness

of the household; sometimes it will be as the voice of the lute, just what we need; and sometimes it will rage and storm and judge the world and thunder against its iniquities and corruptions: we need it all. Christ's was the perfect ministry, and in Christ we find all this kind of preaching. And only that ministry is right, four-square to the edge, that can be both tender and judicial, comforting and critical, sympathetic and damnatory.

Nor must the preacher be afraid of the people or of his own income. That is the great curse of every age of the pulpit, that a man should think whether he is diminishing his own resources when he declares this or that part of the counsel of God. Those who do not like it must go, and take their gold with them. It will buy them nothing. For such metal there is no exchange with God. It will be a mistake to upbraid the ministry of the time for self-consideration to that degree. The preaching of this day is as fearless as it has been in any other day. Not, perhaps, so fearless in every church; but wherever there is fearless preaching there is a congregation rising to thrust the preacher out of existence. The fearless, all-truth-speaking preacher is hated everywhere. He is not and cannot be a popular man. He can have no sympathy with the majority of his race. He must be prepared for consequences.

What a wondrous ministry was Christ's! In verse twenty-two we read, in the same chapter, "And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." A few verses after, the whole of the people in the synagogue "rose up," "being filled with wrath." What a change he wrought! What a wizard he was! Now look at the people. How beaming, how radiant, how benignant! they say. Did charmer ever charm like this? Hear that music, and say, was the like ever heard in Israel? In five minutes more, by historical allusions which the people alone could understand, the same people rose up, being filled with wrath, and would have killed the very charmer whose entrancing power they had just acknowledged.

Was there ever any exciting preaching in the Church? Read: "And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain

of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and they laid hands on them, and put them in hold." They do the same to-day. If you were to preach apostolically you would be put in prison. The magistrate before whom you would be tried would not understand the case. What case is there that a magistrate really and thoroughly understands all round and round where the gospel is concerned, where high moral impulses are involved, and where the real good of the people is the question of the hour? The magistrates have never been on the side of apostolical preachers. The magistrates have always suggested prison as the best treatment for men who preach the gospel. It looks energetic; if a magistrate were to sympathise with the preacher it would look sentimental. A magistrate seems to be doing something for his dignity when he puts somebody in prison. Read the life of George Fox; read the Life and Journals of John Wesley; study the biography of George Whitefield; read the present-day records of the Salvation Army, and say when were apostolical preachers otherwise treated than Christ himself was treated in the very instance before us.

Understand that we are not saying a word against this same popular quiet preaching, in which a man speaks for an hour, and says nothing that can at all offend or exasperate his audience. We are not undervaluing healing preaching. God forbid. For we all need it; if not to-day, yesterday; if not yesterday, to-morrow we shall need it. But we want to point out that the counsel of God is full-orbed, now soft as when Zephyrus on Flora breathes, and now a wind that silences Euroclydon.

But the times have changed! Have they? Who changed them? Is the devil changed? Has that miracle at last been wrought? Has evil washed its hands and come out of the process pure and stainless? What has changed? Is the thief honest? Why, that is a paradox, a contradiction in terms. Are there no thieves to-day? Is the miser generous? When did he convert himself? If he is generous he is not a miser; if he is a miser he is not generous. The times have changed! When? Services may have changed, transient relations may have been transformed and modified, but the times have not changed in the

sense of making sin less sinful, dishonesty less thievish, miserliness less avaricious. We find these great radical principles and policies abiding now in the deepest sense. What if we should be the real thieves? That is a harrowing suggestion. But what if the magistrate should be the real thief, and the little boy who took the pocket-handkerchief should be honest in his soul and only thievish in his fingers, because of some impulsion or compulsion not easily understood by those who are outside the circle and atmosphere within which he lives? What if the man with the fine clothing and the gold ring and the high position be the real thief?—not a vulgar, common, street thief, that is the very poorest kind of felon; but a calculating, long-headed, nimble-fingered gentleman, who writes well and reads much, and talks fluently, and has his turns of piety—what if he in the soul of him and in the whole trick of his policy be the real thief?

Have the times changed? In that direction they may have changed. Refined sin may have displaced rough criminality, but the devil is inconvertible, and will be the same when the hour of doom has struck. Do not misunderstand things, and do not be such wonderful optimists and poets as to see improvements where there really are none at all. If there are improvements prove them, recognise them, be thankful for them; but understand that the devil cannot change. If he is dead the times may have changed. If we have any reason to believe that he is still hidden in some corner of God's universe, he is as fruitful of poison and iniquity as he ever was. What if we be the misers? That is an exasperating suggestion. The man who makes it ought to be led out, and cast down from the top of the highest hill that is accessible. What if we be the misers? Ay, that! You who gave a hundred pounds all at once may be the miser. Why did you give it? In what atmosphere did you act? What was your regnant motive? Go into your soul, and ask your soul torturing questions until you get at the truth. If you gave it honestly, lovingly, gratefully, you will be blessed; you shall have it tenfold back again. The question is, Did you, or did you not? and that question I must force back upon myself until I bleed. Is not every man more or less miserly? Who gives what he ought to give? Who gives to the point of dividing his last crust

with Christ? Does he give anything who withholds anything? Does he answer God's appeal who has his meals regularly and fully, and who sleeps through all the night of the world's darkness and sorrow? These are questions which I must put to myself and hold a long inquest with my own life. And it may turn out that I am the thief, the miser, the felon, the self-indulgent, the wrong-doer. If judgment thus begins at the house of God, what wonder that everybody in the synagogue should rise up inflamed with wrath, mad with resentment? Yet so curiously are we constituted, so wondrously made, that we have a positive delight in hearing the sins of other people denounced. Thus we eke out our own virtue. We do like the man in the next pew to have the truth told plainly to him. We love to hear drunkenness denounced, whereas we may be the real drunkards. The man who drinks his potass may be the real winebibber. That is no paradox; it is a plain, literal possibility in life. Men are what they are in the soul of them. Less the habit, more the spirit, must be taken as the judge and estimate of the man's spiritual quality.

Speaking thus, how different an aspect is put upon everything. The first shall be last, and the last shall be first; and many shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down in God's kingdom of light, and we ourselves, pretentious, ostentatious, pharisaic professors, shall be cast out because we nodded our heads at certain dogmas, but gave no heed to the commandments. We sought to suck the honey of the beatitudes, but never attempted to obey the law.

Great mistakes may thus be made about any ministry. You hear a man once, and judge him altogether. How foolish and unreasonable, how wholly unjust as well as unwise is this course! If you had heard Jesus Christ in the twenty-second verse, so to say, you would have gone away with this report: "So gracious in his speech, so musical, tuneful, tender, comforting." If you had gone away at the twenty-eighth verse you would have said, "Exasperating, maddening his congregation. Instead of taking that people into his hand, and playing upon them as a skilful man would play upon an instrument, he roused them

to madness; yea, so vehement and terrible was he in style that all the people rose up and seized him, and led him out, and would have killed him on the spot." Neither report would have given a fair idea of the ministry of Christ.

Yet this is just how ministries are treated to-day. A man who never heard a minister before falls upon some occasion when the minister is very tender and sympathetic, and thinks he is always so; or falls upon another occasion when the minister is denunciatory, and goes away and reports him in terms that are full of all evil suggestion. You never know any ministry that has anything in it until you have heard it seven years long, in all its moods, tenses, variations, aspects, colours, in the whole gamut of its strength. What is true of a ministry is true of God's Book. We must read it all if we would judge it fairly. It is true of the gospel; we must hear it all if we would pronounce upon it with wisdom and ripeness of judgment.

So with Christ our Lord. Hear him: Blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the meek, blessed are the peacemakers. Oh, how the beatitudes flow from his sacred lips! Hear him: Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; woe unto you, ye lawyers; woe unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee, Bethsaida. Where are your beatitudes now? It is the same man, in the same brief three years' ministry. Behold, you must take in the evening and the morning to make the day. God's great sky has in it four directions, and every one must be estimated and set in its proper relation to the other if you would understand the geometry of God's canopy. Blessed be God, the severity is always against the sin. It is sin that is predestinated to go to hell. It is sin that is foreordained to be damned. Some persons do not like these words, "hell" and "damned"; yet how wondrously men change in their estimate even of such terms and of the doctrine and preaching with which they are associated. I know a remarkable artist who came to a church with which I am very familiar, and heard a sermon on the damnation of wickedness, and fled away in horror because she did not believe in hell and in damnation. Years have come and years have gone, and she is now in the Roman Catholic

Church, where there is a real hell, where there is no want of literal fire. So curiously are we made, and so mysterious is the reaction which is the possibility of our lives.

We must have the whole counsel of God. We must hear of the night as well as of the day, and we must not as ministers and churches allow ourselves to be cozened out of half the truth because there are people who will come in thousands to hear our musical utterances about Christ, who would be exasperated and offended if we held up the law in its terror. We must lose them; we must bear our lot as bravely as we can. Better the pews be empty to the point of desolation; better that the minister should starve than that we should never hear that God is Judge as well as Saviour. All the gentleness is for the sinner. God never turns against the prodigal; he is always against the self-righteous. The self-righteous is, of course, the greatest sinner, but God has no pity upon him, because he cannot have pity where there is no pity for himself, that is to say, for the sinner, the man himself. The man is self-righteous, self-satisfied; he has enough, he wants no more; he is a perfect man and an upright, yea, he is the temple of the living God, and other men are the filth and the off-scouring of the race. God can have no pity for that man. He can only encounter him with sternness and judgment, and visit him with the final penalty. But where there is a broken heart, where there is a contrite spirit, where there is a desire to come home again, all the angels are sent down to make the way easy, and great welcomes await the returning prodigal. God is gentle and good towards any soul that can weep over its own guilt and its own sorrow. Let us, therefore, take heart and come before him with tears. He will dwell with the contrite in spirit.

This is my conclusion: It ought to be the greatest blessing of society to have within it a pulpit that can be both gentle and terrible. When you lose that pulpit you lose a saving element from your social constitution. It ought to be the supremest educational force in morals to have a pulpit that is afraid of no face of clay; to have a pulpit that will speak all the counsel of God, come weal, come woe. Do not let us misunderstand this.

He is the great preacher who preaches to himself. Yea, he is the man to be trusted who first takes up the law and smites himself with it, and tells you across the ruins of a broken law that he is criminal as well as preacher. I would listen to that man. It is an infinite impertinence on the part of any man to preach the law as if he kept it. It is an infinite help to us to hear any man preach the law who says he has broken it all through and through, yet by the mercy of God, as shown in the Cross of Christ, he has crawled home again, and has begun to taste the sweets of divine forgiveness.

NOTES.

[From the *Speaker's Commentary.*]

Ver. 28. *Filled with wrath.*—They were indignant at his rejection of his countrymen which he points by citing the examples of the two great prophets. They may also have understood him to hint that he had a mission even to the heathen.

Ver. 29. *Thrust him out.*—Drove him out with violence.

The brow.—Or *a brow*, according to a great preponderance of authority. Two natural features, in the neighbourhood of Nazareth, may still be identified. . . . "The second is indicated in the Gospel history by one of those slight touches which serve as a testimony to the truth of the description, by nearly approaching, but yet not crossing, the verge of inaccuracy. 'They rose,' it is said of the infuriated inhabitants, and cast him out of the city, and brought him to a brow of the mountain. . . . on which the city was built, so as to cast him down the cliff.' . . . Most readers probably from these words imagine a town built on the summit of a mountain, from which summit the intended precipitation was to take place. This, as I have said, is not the situation of Nazareth. Yet its position is still in accordance with the narrative. It is built 'upon,' that is, on the side of, 'a mountain,' but the 'brow' is not beneath, but over the town, and such a cliff . . . as is here implied is to be found, as all modern travellers describe, in the abrupt face of the limestone rock, about thirty or forty feet high, overhanging the Maronite convent at the south-west corner of the town, and another at a little further distance." (Stanley, "Sinai and Palestine," ch. x.) One such cliff, about two miles from Nazareth, is shown as the "Mount of Precipitation."

That they might cast, etc.—Read, *so as to cast.*

PRAYER.

Blessed Jesus, thou knowest all things; thou readest every heart; thou needest not that any should testify of man, for thou knowest what is in man. Truly we bear the image and likeness of God, and thou, being in the bosom of the Father, knowest all things that are in our nature. We can hide nothing from thee; but, blessed be thy name, thine eyes are not eyes of justice only, they are eyes of love, compassion, tenderness; they see us as we are, they see us as we might be, they see us in the purpose of God. Behold, we come to thee; to thee all men must come; thou canst find the piece we have lost; thou canst bring back our whole being, our highest quality, our truest character; thou canst restore us to our standing in the household of God. Blessed One, we love thee; we do not only revere thee and admire thee, and offer the homage due to great power; but we love thee, we yearn towards thee, we struggle after thee, we struggle after thee in the crowd, knowing that if we can but touch the hem of thy garment we shall lose all our disease. O thou Great Speaker, Great Healer, Friend of the broken heart, and Helper of the helpless, come to us day by day, bringing the daily bread we need for the body, and the bread of life we need for the soul. We have read thy life—we have sat down with thee, we have looked at thee; we have been with thee when we thought no eye could see us, when hardly thine own vision could detect us, so deep was the darkness and so complete our concealment; and after all we have heard and seen and known and felt of thee we love thee all the more. Lord, abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent with many: break bread to us with thine own dear hands, and when we begin to touch what thou hast blessed we shall see thee, a vanishing glory, but a light to come again. Amen.

Chapter vii.

A CONSPECTUS OF CHRIST'S MIRACLES.

MY purpose is to show the congruity of Christ's miracles; to point out with what beauty and precision they accommodate themselves to one another; to indicate the family likeness of the miracles; how much soever they may seem to differ from one another, yet there is a central and all-uniting line bringing them into perfect congruity, and showing how possible it is in the midst of great diversity to have real spiritual unity.

Observe what is in the chapter. Here is a servant cured who was ready to die; a dead man raised to life whilst he was being carried out to be buried; an hour crowded with wonders, such an hour as probably never occurred before even in the history of Jesus Christ; and, lastly, a sinner forgiven, in connection with which a human heart was revealed to itself. Let us suppose all these miracles occurring just as they are found in this chapter: our immediate purpose is not to find precise dates, or to rectify chronologies if needful, but to look at the chapter as it is written for us in our English Bibles; and looking at it so to find out the congruousness, the moral unity, the benevolent and beneficent solidarity of the whole work of Jesus Christ. Note how we come into this gallery of miracles: by what door did we enter? If we knew it, we should find that the door itself is greater than any miracle it opens upon. The door is indicated in the first verse of the chapter—"Now when he had ended all his sayings." The speech was the great miracle; how it welled up out of the heart; how it brought a taste of eternity with it; how it sounded unlike all other music, and put all mere philosophy, speculation, and intellectual adventure to shame! How simple the sayings, but how profound! A child thinks he can carry them all; yet an angel cannot see the depth of their wisdom, or measure all the scope of their meaning. When we come to judge by right standards, we shall find that words are the greatest miracles when they are employed to reveal infinite wisdom, when they are set up as sanctuaries in which God himself is enshrined, when they are used sacrificially for religious purposes; for all words must be slain by the very deity they would convey, if they attempt to represent God. Truly we drag our eloquence to the altar to slay it and burn it by the message which we would convey through its tones. We do not, however, judge spiritually; we are still victims of our senses: to see the brilliant sight, to hear the startling sound, to observe the new phenomenon,—to these base uses do we drag ourselves. The time will come when we shall rather say, Blessed is he who is revealed in these words which constitute our mother tongue; wonderful is the might of God, that in words so familiar to us he can show us all the surprises of his love.

Notice the motive or line of reason which runs through the whole of this narrative. Jesus marvelled at the faith of the centurion, saying, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." It was more than amazement, it was gratitude; there were tears in his voice as he expressed this astonishment. He loves faith; he will do anything for faith. Believest thou that I am able to do this? Yea, Lord. Then take it all! said he. Christ withholds nothing from faith. That is the miracle he looks for. We cannot surprise him by genius, by brilliance, by boldness of intellectual conjecture and speculation, but we can surprise him by trust, faith, confidence. He looks for spiritual miracles. We can amaze him by our love. If we kiss his feet, he thrills with an infinite sensation of delight. When he praises, what does he commend? If we read the history of Christ aright, we shall be struck with the fewness of the instances in which he uttered commendation; but when we bring them together we shall see that they are all of the same quality. He praised a prayer: what was it? The Pharisee's pompous self-defence? No. The publican's self-abasement—"God be merciful to me a sinner." That prayer pleased the Son of God: it sounded like prayer; it was all prayer; it startled him into the utterance of eulogium. He praised a donation: what was it? The widow's two mites: he saw so much in them, a whole fortune, an absolute devotion, a miracle of wealth. He praised a servant: in what terms did he commend him? In moral terms—"Good and faithful." Christ's commendations are all on the same line, all directed to the same point, all rich with the same quality; and his commendation runs upon a line on which all men may stand. This is not a tribute to gigantic stature, to phenomenal genius, to occasional brilliance, to eccentric gift; it is a benediction pronounced upon actions which children can commit, which the common people can execute. When he saw the widow following her dead, "he had compassion on her." He is easily touched with the feeling of our infirmities; he could have looked upon all the Pharisees in the universe, and passed by them with an infinite disdain; but when we need him most, and cannot see him for our tears, he will move all heaven to help us. He was condescending to the weakness of his forerunner. When John sent a doubt to him he sent back a

gospel; he said, I will perform a thousand miracles to heal this heart of doubt. In that hour—such was the lustrous focal point of the omnipotence of Christ—"In that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight." What a day of festival! What an amnesty was proclaimed that day! Not only that the men may be healed who were ailing in body, but that a man might be healed who was sick at heart, saying, in his imprisonment and darkness, After all, I wonder if this is the Son of God?

Then, finally, came his response to love. When did he say no to true affection? He gave the woman all she wanted—a new girlhood, a new morning, a new heart, a new conception of God. Observe that all these feelings are of the same quality—wonder, compassion, condescension, and recognition of love. Jesus never worked a miracle for the sake of working it. They were but miracles to the observers; they were no miracles to him. If "miracle" means surprise, alteration, unexpectedness, incalculableness, it would be impossible for Christ to work a miracle to himself; all the ministry of Christ is but miraculous on its human side, on the aspects which it bears to observers. Christ was no specialist. Observe what he did:—"Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised." The whole circuit of miracles is swept. There are men who are strong at points; they are men who rejoice in the name of "specialists,"—that is to say, they have made particular studies of particular diseases, and in the treatment of those diseases they have earned a very just reputation; but Jesus Christ was not a specialist, so we have infinite variety in his miracles—"blind," "lame," "lepers," "deaf," "dead." Jesus Christ did not treat symptoms, nor did he ever merely lessen human suffering, saying, Now the burden is not quite so heavy as it was; you are considerably relieved after this mitigatory treatment to which I have subjected you; you will be able to return home with more ease than you came from it. Jesus Christ never performed half a miracle; all his wonders are associated with the most perfect ease of action. He commanded, and it was done; his word was the miracle. He said, Let there be! and there was, so quick

the change of tense and reality, of time and space and fact of every kind. Why? Because he penetrated to the heart of things. He said, The disease is at the centre; other men are looking at symptomatic changes, and are inferring from those changes what they can of the nature of the disease: the deadly disease is here, in the very heart, at the very core. So he touched that, and in the cheek there flamed red health, and in the voice there sang new energy and consciousness of power.

We ourselves can supply the conditions of the miracle. What were those conditions in this chapter?—need, faith, sorrow, love. Observe, there is a line of co-operation in all this action. So in nature we do something. Why rip up the ground? why sow the seed? why close the furrows? what are you expecting? We have buried this seed, say you, in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. That we can also do in the Church. We can be working as if we expected a miracle. Jesus will never disappoint that expectation. He will say to us, What do ye here, building an altar, filling the trench with water, laying the wood, supplying the offering—what mean ye by all these things? And the answer is, We are expecting the descent of God: we know we shall realise it; nothing shall be wanting on our part; if this fail, the blame be God's. When the Church speaks so, the Church will not be disappointed—when we leave the onus with God, when we can truly stand up and say, Nothing has been wanting on our part; we have prepared for a miracle, we have prayed for a miracle, we have been expecting a miracle, we have pledged God to a miracle, and all the jibing crowd is come to see whether God will answer prayer. Could we conduct the process in that spirit, in that high tone of reverence, with that sublimity of expectation, God would not be wanting on his part.

There is another line running through the narrative which in the blaze of glory may be entirely concealed; so to say, there is a deity higher than we have yet seen in these gathering wonders. What if the compassion was greater than the healing? What if the moral was grander than the miracles? We are surprised at miracles, as we have said, and Christ is surprised at faith. Is it nothing that the first miracle was done at a distance? Jesus

never saw the first man who was to be healed; Jesus Christ did not go near the man, did not observe him with the eyes of his body; and yet the man was healed. Distance is nothing to Christ; with God there is no distance. We ourselves are beginning to talk of annihilating distance, annihilating time and space: thus we grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; thus science brings us to the altar; thus we are trained to know the meaning of words which once were but symbolic, algebraic, charged with spiritual possibilities which we could not compass, —slowly, gradually, we are being brought round by all manner of lower education to be able to grasp in some degree great spiritual significations. Is it nothing that the second miracle was not asked for? Did the widow pray Jesus to help her? Poor sufferer, she could not: her heart was full, her throat was choked, her eyes were dim with the waters of sorrow; she never spake a word to Christ about the matter, and yet the miracle was done. There is mute prayer—an awful, silent, looking supplication. Sometimes we get beyond the region of words, and Jesus Christ looks at our attitude, listens to our breathing, numbers our tears, and says, Poor soul! he would ask me to-day for seven miracles if he could, but not a word will come to his dry lips; I will go to him, for he cannot come to me. The greatest miracle of all was not asked for. We get greater things for not asking than we ever get by supplication. The Son of God came to earth, not in answer to prayer, but in realisation of divine purpose and divine love.

The coming of the Saviour is the supreme miracle of the universe, and that was brought about by no man's prayer. How much we get that we do not ask for! Who asks for sunrise, who asks for summer, in the broadest significations of these terms? Who asks for all the great benisons that are sent down from heaven for the warmth and comfort and culture of this little cold earth? Is it nothing that by the healing of others we are healed ourselves? To heal John's doubt, Christ cured other men's bodies. He sent John a whole galaxy of miracles, a gathering-up, a summation of phases of almightiness; not one miracle only, for that might have been misconstrued, but miracles at every point of the circle—blind, deaf, dumb, lame, widowed, palsied,

dead; they could not forget that message; they might have confused one incident, but when a whole encyclopædia of miracle was wrought it would be impossible wholly to miss the point and accent of that great gospel. The same evidence is open to us. When we ourselves doubt, in some prison of darkness, go abroad into the world, and see the miracles Christ is working every day, and let the miracles done for others be miracles of healing in our own heart—of fear, or hopelessness, or doubt. Thus the miracle is twice .wrought: first, wrought upon those who need bodily release; and, secondly, wrought upon those who need spiritual light and comfort. Is it nothing that Christ notices the neglects of our life and worship—the simple omissions with which we are chargeable? Hear how Jesus speaks to Simon:—"Thou gavest me no water. . . . Thou gavest me no kiss. . . . My head with oil thou didst not anoint." He went to be the guest of the Pharisee: did he notice what the Pharisee did for him? Everything; he knew everything that was on the table; he recognised it if he did not eat it. He does not like to be treated as if he were no one of particular dignity or consequence. He does not consume the feast, but he notices every little device of love. Thus he noticed what the woman did: "She hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. . . . This woman . . . hath not ceased to kiss my feet. . . . This woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." Jesus knows all we do. When we go out on errands for him in the snowy night, in the cold winter, in calculated secrecy so that nobody may know what we are about,—when we open our hand to give as if we were not opening it, but looking at something beyond, he puts it all down in his register; and specially does he notice neglect on the part of those whose neglect is not due to poverty. We may not insult Christ; alas, we may neglect him. It is not enough not to have blasphemed: our silence may be blasphemy; we may have omitted to sing, to praise God with a loud voice, to laud and magnify him with fearlessness of worship. Christ thus notices the negative aspects of our character; and herein he works a miracle as great as any of the wonders which startled us in the earlier parts of the chapter. He read the Pharisee's heart; the Pharisee thought he was reading Christ's spirit, and detecting in him inability to penetrate the character of another, when in a

moment he turned upon him all the lightnings of creation, and Simon was revealed to himself. Notice the tender delicacies of love, the little attentions. The Pharisee gave Christ meat, but he omitted the water, the kiss, the ointment—the little things that finish with grace what was begun with large hospitality. It is in the detail that we discover our characters. The cabinet maker cannot furnish a house; he may put down all his mahogany and walnut, and the house is quite cold and bare; we must have little touches of colour, artistic devices, not necessarily representing wealth and great affluence of resources, but the woman's touch, the gentle, simple thing, the new turning which only a skilled hand can give to a common object or article;—all these things that give fascination to home are done not with great broad rough hands, but with genuinely delicate fingers—delicate because the heart is charged with the courtesy of love. It is not enough that now and then the son has done some great thing for his mother—plunged his hand into his pocket and produced a handful of gold, and said with some roughness, Take that, and never charge me again with being unkind to you. The son was never unkinder than when he made that speech. The mother wants a thousand other things beside, or perhaps instead of, that glaring gold: a little sympathy, a little attention, a little consideration; a hundred things done for her without her attention being called to them, so that when she comes she finds that some one has been there to anticipate the wish, to be before her, to have all things ready for her. O thou generous Giver of all good, dost thou not set thy sun in the heavens before we awake? and is not thy glory standing there when we open our eyes? Thou preventest me. Thou goest before me with thy goodness.

Here, then, we have healed suffering, healed heart-ache, healed sin, and the healed sin is the greatest miracle of all. My friend, is thy sin healed? If the answer is, "Yes, by the grace of God," then be not ashamed of him who forgave it, but publish that sweet gospel everywhere: through the miracle wrought in thee another miracle may be wrought in some listening observer. Thus all the miracles of Christ fall into beauteous rhythmic congruity. In reality there was but one miracle, and that one miracle was himself.

PRAYER.

As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth our soul after thee, O God—living, good, and wise evermore, gentler than all motherhood, and more majestic than all kingliness. Verily thou hast all things in thyself; thou commandest, and it is done; thou utterest the word, and behold what thou callest for is there, present in all its reality, to do thy bidding. Thou dost turn water into wine, thou dost turn common bread into sacramental food, and thou dost make all things new, yea, even new heavens and a new earth. But there is one renewal above all others we long to know, and that is a renewal of our own spirit. If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature: old things have passed away; all things have become new. This is the newness we want to experience; then we shall see it with our eyes that are within, and feel it in all the outgoing and purpose of life. Thus thou dost deliver us from the power of monotony; thou art making new heavens and a new earth every day, did we but see the mighty creation as we ought to see it; and thou art renewing the inward man day by day by subtle ministries of spiritual assistance, did we but yield ourselves to the working of thy compassion. Thou dost work in many ways: the chariots of God are twenty thousand in number—yea, thousands of thousands; and thou comest into the heart as thou wilt, by many a door we know not of; thou hast access to our life in ten thousand ways: come by any one of them, only come; even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly! through our imagination, or our judgment, or our pain, or our contrition, or our expectation,—choose thine own way, only hear the sighing of the heart as it says, Lord Jesus, come! When thou comest the heart-house will be made beautiful by thy presence, and there shall be great hospitality, for thou wilt spread the table as with thy blood, and minister unto us of the wine of thy grace. Lord Jesus, come; come by healing our diseases, by satisfying our mouth with good things, by renewing our youth as the eagle's, by giving unto us assurance of pardon whilst we tarry at the Cross; in thine own way do thou hasten to us, only hear us when we say, Lord Jesus, come! Amen.

Chapter viii.

CHRIST'S SUSTENANCE ACCOUNTED FOR.

WE have wondered how Jesus Christ subsisted. The explanation would seem to be given here. There are with him not only the twelve, but also "certain women," some of whose names are given, "which ministered unto him of their

substance." We are not wholly unfamiliar with that species of action; we have read in the ancient books of a woman who "said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, in the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither." It was not unusual in Bible times, and even down to New Testament days, for the richer women to keep a Rabbi or a prophet out of their income, sustaining the good man in his educational and evangelistic works. Here we find the Son of God subsisting by similar means. "There were with him many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." Yet the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. And yet both statements are open to the most perfect reconciliation. Thus we work in different ways—the divine Minister who does everything, the Christ of God; and the lesser ministers who do their work on a small scale, but whatever is done is taken, and is magnified and glorified by the living God. Some of the names are given. We ought always to be thankful for what is written, not only because it shows itself within its own boundaries so vividly, but because it enables us to draw inferences regarding many things which are not explained. "And certain women, which had been healed." What a key is there! Jesus Christ does not want any others to follow him than those to whom he himself has first ministered. It is possible so to read the passage as to omit the fact that Jesus Christ's ministry was first. The mind comes suddenly upon the statement that certain women ministered unto him of their substance, and the mind is apt to dwell upon that circumstance with magnifying emphasis; whereas we ought to read the narrative so carefully as to get out of it all its music, and so reading it we shall find that Jesus was first, for the women who followed him "had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities," and, as we shall presently see, their attachment to him was grounded upon a still wider basis.

"Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils." Some have said, seven evil spirits or dispositions; unwilling to

recognise what is termed demoniacal possession, they have regarded these as seven evil tempers, bad dispositions, wicked desires. Practically, it comes to the same thing: whatever they were, devils or dispositions, they were cast out by the Son of God; there is the working of the divine power; there is the miracle of wisdom and grace, of human compassion and divine ability. "And Joanna"—do we know anything of her? She was "the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward." Some have traced her by critical processes to be the mother of the nobleman's son who, when at the point of death, was healed by the Son of God. Out of her there was cast no evil spirit, and she was not cured of any personal infirmity: why, then, did she follow this Nazarene? Ask her. Try to detach her from his following, and she will tell you, with tears of gratitude and joy, that Jesus Christ was the resurrection and the life in her house; say of him what others may, she knows that he cured her son, and from that point she cannot be dislodged by any evil suggestion or by any sophism. Hers was a personal gratitude for personal favours. Jesus Christ thus is followed by people who have understood him at some point. It is not necessary that all who follow Jesus Christ should understand every phase of his personality, and be able to explain every section of his ministry, and to answer all the questions which may be put concerning him; the people who followed Jesus Christ knew him at some point, and that became emphatically their point, and one of them gave expression to the sentiment of the whole when he said, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

How much has Christianity itself suffered from the delusion that those who profess it must be able to answer the questions; that every Christian must be a theologian, a man of science, a profound philosopher, an accurate logician, and an eloquent speaker. Nothing of the kind. It is for every Christian to have his own view of Christ, his own particular song of praise concerning what the Son of God has done; and so long as men keep to that personal testimony their utterance will be unbroken as to emphasis, and direct and unanswerable as to practical appeal. "And Joanna"—do we ever hear of her again? The time came when Jesus Christ was in the tomb, and certain women

went to see where the Lord lay. "It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them." Here is constancy. The names do not appear upon great occasions of triumph; the women were not ornamental pillars who came out on state occasions; they were not sun-flowers that could live only in all their freshness at midday: they were with the Son of God, ministering unto him, and when he was dead they still thought they could do something for him. Who can allow the dead to go without some last touch, or kiss, or flower reverently laid on the door of the black prison? There is always some other little thing that can be done. This is how Jesus Christ subsisted then—taking nothing from any one to whom he had not himself first ministered.

This is the only way of sustaining Christianity. It lives by the enthusiasm of its followers. It is not to be mechanically buttressed and supported and patronised. Jesus Christ, so long as the earth exists and his Church abides, must be ministered unto by those out of whom he has cast devils, whose children he has blessed, whose houses he has lighted up from the very fountain of the sun. Christianity lives upon enthusiasm, or it does not live at all. Christ has a right to look to those who bear his name, because if they bear it honestly they bear it on account of what he himself has done for them. Men do not come and take up Christianity for the purpose of doing it some favour, saying, We have looked at you from a distance, and the more we have looked the better we have been pleased with your banners, and now we are about to show you some regard for your general respectability, and therefore we will speak of you wherever we have suitable opportunities. Christianity disdains the paltry patronage. Christianity must be spoken about because it is in a man, and will not allow him to be dumb; it is a new spirit, the eloquent spirit, the burning spirit, and it must declare its presence in the soul by touching the tongue with eloquence, and leading the hand forth into constant and generous service. When we are asked why we minister to Christ, we reply, Because he first ministered unto us: we love him because he first loved us.

That is one view of Jesus Christ which this chapter supplies.

Now we have another aspect of the Son of God in relation to his teaching. He taught positively, and he taught negatively. How did he teach positively? By fact and by parable, and by giving the larger meanings of things. He found a man sowing, and he said, That is my text. He found a woman putting leaven into three measures of meal, and he said, That is my subject. He found men selling all that they had for the purpose of buying one particular gem, and said, That is what you have to do in your spiritual education, if you are wise. Sometimes all things must go for the sake of one thing. To the eye of Jesus Christ all men were revealing the kingdom of heaven in some aspect, although they were doing it unconsciously: the sower did not know that he was supplying the Son of God with the basis of a parable. We limit ourselves too severely by excluding the poetry and the apocalyptic view and issue of things, supposing that when we lift a hand we do nothing more; when we utter a word we have simply uttered a vocable, and there is an end of the exercise: whereas, if we were wise, we should find that our outgoing, our incoming, our downsitting, our uprising—yea, every breath of our respiratory system,—all things—are parabolic and suggestive, the beginnings and the germs of great spiritual thoughts and possibilities. So Jesus came to give the great meanings of things. In explanation he said, "The parable is this: The seed is the word of God." What a key is here, as in the former instance! Jesus Christ seems always to deliver up the key to men when they are in a right mood of mind and heart. Once Peter gave such a great answer to a question put to him by the Son of God, that Jesus Christ took the keys and gave them to him at once. Thus he rewards faith, the genius of love, the passion of enthusiasm. We should have more keys if we had more qualification for sustaining them and using them aright. Not only was this a key to a particular instance, it is a key which opens a thousand locks. The seed is the word of God; the leaven is the spirit of truth; the pearl of great price is truth itself; the returning prodigal is the returning soul; the music and dancing in the father's house is heaven's rapture when heaven's number is increased. Oh that we had eyes to see and hearts to understand! then all the world would come with its spring lessons and summer and autumn and winter lessons, and the snow would

be as eloquent as the blossoms, and the hard ice would have its gospel as well as all the rains of summer. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!

Not only did he teach thus positively, but he exhorted; he said, "Take heed therefore how ye hear" (ver. 18). In Jesus Christ's sermons there is always a line of exhortation. We ought to notice more and more that without exhortation a sermon is not complete, and is little worth. The preacher must come down upon the hearer with all the power he can command of appeal, persuasion, entreaty; he should beseech men to be reconciled to God. Here, again, is a key. "Never man spake like this man!" He begins by pronouncing a number of beatitudes, and we listen with delight to his mellifluous voice; his lips were formed for eloquence, his eye was set in his head for illumination, for it assists the tongue to make his meaning plain: but presently we are awakened out of this intellectual reverie, and are withdrawn from this spiritual luxury, by an exhortation sharp as a crack of thunder, and we are called to be, to do, to stand, to go, to die! How many of us leave Christ at the point of exhortation! In exposition we like to hear him, because then we can partly contradict him, and contend our own opinion after he is exhausted as to speech; in poetry we love to listen to him, for the words know one another, and recognise their mutual kinship, and the whole speech flows like a deep and all but silent river; but when he comes to bid us follow him, take up our cross, deny ourselves, take heed, we begin to feel that he is imposing upon us discipline, and discipline is never acceptable to a nature that loves indulgence. But Christianity is discipline. Christianity is a commandment as well as a theology. Some can obey who cannot fully understand, and, alas, many have great understanding who never attempt to obey.

Not only did Jesus Christ teach positively, but he taught negatively. There was an occasion upon which he went into a ship with his disciples; and "he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. But as they sailed he fell asleep." Can he teach in sleep? He

always teaches. Every look is a lesson; every word a condensed volume. How will Jesus Christ teach by falling asleep? He will teach by showing the disciples what they can do without him. This is the only way, if we may so put it, that Jesus Christ can awaken us to true self-consciousness. So long as we have the sun in the heavens we expect him to return; we treat him as in some sense a hired servant: he is looked for, and if he does not do his duty we complain of his neglect: but we cannot restore him to his place; we have no power over the clouds, and we must wait until the sun reappears. It is so with the Sun of Righteousness; Jesus Christ must withdraw from us to teach us of what value he has been. We do not know sometimes that a prophet has been amongst us until the prophet is dead. Then we feel a strange vacancy; we miss a personality, an influence, a presence, an effect, a blessing; then we ask questions, and then we discover that the King has passed by, and we failed to recognise his crown and sceptre. Jesus Christ might have lived with his disciples so long that they imagined they could do very well with him or without him; they had seen his method, they knew the lines which he traversed, and they could supply what was lacking if he himself was not present. Such was their infatuation upon some occasions that they attempted to work miracles when Jesus was not there, and they said to devils, Depart, and the devils mocked them with bitter laughter, and tore their subjects with still greater strength, and inflamed and excited them by still more appalling paroxysms. Then Jesus himself drew nigh and said, What is it? And the man most in question as a sympathiser said, I brought my son to thy disciples that they might heal him, and they cannot. Thus Jesus Christ teaches by withdrawment, by falling asleep, by simply standing aside, by becoming an onlooker, instead of an active worker. Thus he teaches. The withdrawment is not an arbitrary act, the sleep is not merely a natural necessity; out of these things must come lessons, showing how true it is that without Christ we can do nothing. Evil spirits utter their scorn at our incantations, and the waters pour their billows upon our little craft, heedless of our impotent cry. Do not let us have any Christianity without Christ, any mechanism that is not wrought from within by a dynamic agency, a spiritual inspiration; then every wheel will

roll smoothly, and the whole machinery (which we are obliged to have for the execution of religious purposes) will move on, each part answering the other part as with intelligent obedience and co-operation. We may retain the altar without Christ, but there can be no sacrifice upon it; we may retain the Church, but it will be but a set of gilded walls, not a centre of power and a fountain of refreshment, if Jesus Christ himself be not in it.

Then see not only how he subsisted and how he taught, but how he healed. A man representing the uttermost distress had come under his attention, and Jesus had renewed the man, and the issue is thus stated—"Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind." These are the tests, and we cannot alter them; we cannot lower the standard; these alone, and standards equal to them, are the tests by which Christ's work in society must be judged. Let us judge ourselves by them. What was the man doing? He was "sitting at the feet of Jesus." Then he was subdued, chastened, refined, docile. Has the same miracle been wrought in us? sitting as a learner; not as an equal, not as a dictator, not as a critic, but sitting at the feet of Jesus to hear what the Master had to say, and to embody it in beautiful and generous life. "Sitting at the feet of Jesus." If I may but touch the hem of his garment I shall be healed; if I may sit at his feet it will be heaven enough for me; if I might but just feel his shadow passing over me I shall ask for no other benediction. Thus we begin. To what heights we may ascend none can tell; but Jesus Christ himself says that if we overcome, being faithful unto death, we shall sit with him on his throne. Meanwhile, it is enough to be led into the city like the blind Saul; in after years he will be blind again, but it will be in the third heaven. "Clothed," that is a common expression to us, but in this instance it was a most uncommon circumstance. The man who had been healed had not been clothed a long time—"A certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs," is the description we read of him in the 27th verse. Now he is renewed in habit, civilised, part of a

commonalty; no longer a rude solitary man, but tesselated socially, related civically, and now part of organised society.

Sometimes little things show what has been wrought in a man,—sitting in a new place, sitting in a new attitude, sitting in the house of God reverently; not looking at other people and wondering what they are doing, but looking to the centre with an eye that cannot be diverted. For some men to sit still is a miracle; for some poor light heads to listen betokens that God has been at work with them; such their natural frivolity that they cannot maintain an attitude of reverence and dignity in the house of God, and when you see them in such attitude then know that Omnipotence has not failed. "And in his right mind": the clouds all gone, the trance broken, the madness subsided, ruled like an angry sea that has been tranquillised by a divine fiat; now looking squarely at men, the eye no longer unsteady, fiery, wandering, but fixed and calm as a planet. These are the standards by which we must judge. Are we sitting at Christ's feet? Have all our habits been changed, and are we in our right mind—humble, modest, self-distrustful, dependent upon God every moment, saying to him, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: do not leave me for a single instant to myself, or I shall commit suicide, and go to hell"? These are the tests; not our little power of criticising one another, and distinguishing between Christian sects and denominations, and playing the artificial theologian, and talking unintelligible metaphysics; but these practical standards—seated as scholars at the great Teacher's feet, part of the great society and brotherhood of man, with a steady, calm, aspiring mind that has realised its dignity, and is endeavouring to discharge its obligations.

How many ways there are all leading to Christ! Here are the women who have been healed doing something for him according to their resources and their opportunities; here are others coming in through the gate of parable, having had the kingdom of heaven revealed to them by signs and by things which are being done in common life, and by spiritual interpretations of the commonplaces of the day; and here are others being taught by feeling how nothing and less than nothing they are when Jesus Christ

is not actively present—how they bungle over their work, how they begin at the wrong end, sow in the wrong field, reap nothing but darkness in the harvest-time, and at winter are left in desolation and poverty; and here are others who are healed from great extremities—drunkards, who had been given up as losses, turned into sober citizens; madmen, who never spoke but irrationally, subdued and chastened into a docile spirit; wanderers on the face of the earth set in their right places in society. Let us go to Christ in some way. It is not for any man to say, This is the only way by which you can come. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, yea, thousands of thousands, and men may go to God in tw..nty thousand different ways; and provided they wish to go to God with their whole love, they will realise their desire. "While he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran." That is how God does towards us. Whilst we are yet a great way off, wrong in our thinking, mistaken in our intellectual conceptions, hesitating as to certain moral positions, poor and ignorant and weak, he sees us, and has compassion upon us, and runs toward us, lest another step should turn us backward, lest the foe should prevail were he himself to tarry too long. The question which each man has to ask himself is this, Can I get to the Son of God in any way? I cannot understand the preachers, the theologians, the churches, the literature religious, and therefore I feel that I am kept outside; but here is an opportunity given to me, because a preacher says, Come to Christ in some way—your own way—only insist upon seeing Christ. Then perhaps some poor heart may say, I will go in this way—broken-hearted, contrite, desolate, ashamed; I will go at night, when everybody is asleep, and I will utter my first prayer when the house is quiet as a cemetery: I think I dare go in that way. Then—Go!

Chapter ix.

TYPICAL MEN.

THIS chapter shows us how very different men may be from one another. It also shows us the point of union by which all men are kept together, notwithstanding their contrariety to make and fire and purpose. There is no monotony in human nature; yet human nature is one. It will be interesting to give speciality of position in the eye of our imagination to some of the typical men who are so graphically described in this chapter.

First of all, here is the perplexed man:

"Now Herod the tetrarch [see note, p. 252] heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed" (ver. 7).

This is a singular word. When we have a pictorial dictionary we shall see a very graphic illustration of the meaning of this term. We use another set of words which are very homely but quite memorable; words which are often quoted, and which are not always fully understood in their etymological references. This word διηπόρει (dieporei) imports that the man who was in this condition was perplexed, really stuck in the mud. That is the literal import of the word. He could not move easily, and in all his movement he was trying to escape,—now he was moving to the right, then he was moving to the left; now forward, now backward, now sideward; he was making all kinds of motion with a view to self-extrication, and he could not deliver himself from this mood of hesitancy and incertitude. Herod was perplexed about Christ, and curiously perplexed; for his instinct put down his dogma, his conscience blew away as with a scornful wind his theological view of life and destiny.

Why was Herod perplexed?—

"Because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead; and

of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again" (vers. 7, 8).

Why did Herod trouble himself about these dead men? As a Sadducee he did not believe in spirit or in resurrection. If he had been quite faithful and steadfast to his creed, he would have said in answer to all these rumours, Whoever this man may be, he has nothing whatever to do with another world, for other world there is none: as to resurrection, dismiss the superstition and forget it. But Herod had never been in this situation before. Circumstances play havoc with some creeds. They are admirable creeds whilst the wind is in the south-west, and the way lies up a green slope, and birds are singing around us, and all heaven seems inclined to reveal its glories in one blaze; then we can have our theories and inventions and conjectures, and can play the little tricky controversialist with many words: but when the wolf bites us, how is it then? When all the money is lost; when the little child lies at the last gasp; when the doctor himself has gone away, saying it will be needless for him to return,—how then? Men should have a creed that will abide with them every day in the week without consulting thermometer or barometer; a creed that will sing the most sweetly when the heart most needs heaven's music; a great faith, an intelligent, noble, free-minded faith, that says to the heart in its moods of dejection, All will come well: hold on, never despair, never give up; one more prayer, one more day, in a little while. A faith of this kind saves men from perplexity; it gives the life of man solidity, centralisation, outlook, hope. It is an awkward thing to have a creed that will not bear this stress. Herod's Sadduceeism went down when a tap came to the door by invisible fingers. We can do what we will with matter; if the fingers are of bone and flesh, they can be smitten and broken: but who can touch invisible fingers! Then what have we to take down by way of comfort? We have declared that we know nothing, and have taken quite lofty pride in our boundless ignorance; but here is a hand at the door, and the door must be answered, and you must answer it. Herod was perplexed, hesitant, now on this side, now on that side; he could not tell what to do. So are men perplexed about Christ to-day who do not believe in him. It is one of two things in regard to this Son of man: cordial, loving, positive trust, the whole heart-

love poured out like wine into a living flagon; or it is now belief, now unbelief, now uncertainty, now a prayer breathed to the very devil that he would come and take possession of the mind so as to drive out all perplexity and bewilderment. The latter course ends in deepening confusion and darkness. The only thing that will bear the stress of every weight, the collision of every conflict, is Faith—simple, loving, grateful faith. Lord, increase our faith.

Here is the helpless and despairing man:—

"Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus hath done unto him. And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him. And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him" (viii. 37-42).

Why did not the man help himself? Why did not his friends help him? Why did not the disciples come to his assistance? Luke takes note of many particular incidents. His narrative is distinguished by points of observation which we do not find in the other evangelists; he alone says "for he had one only daughter." So with regard to the widow of Nain; speaking of her son, he says, "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." There are men who see little pathetic points in history. They sprinkle their history with the dew of tears. Other men see nothing but hurrying events, a rush and a tumult. Blessed are they who see heartbreak, and signs of sorrow on the cheek, and channels wrought in the flesh by flowing grief. Why did not this man heal his child? The clamour of twelve children was not in his ears; he had but one daughter: why did he not make her immortal? Alas, we are limited; we soon come to the last bottle of medicine, the last prescription; even the pharmacopœia may be emptied. Does this man represent those who only come to Christ in extremity? Whilst there is another

recipe in the house they will not pray; whilst there is another draught that may be taken they will not lift up their eyes appealingly to kind heaven. We cannot tell. There are men who do just so. They come to prayer at last,—they end where they ought to have begun. There is no medicine that prayer will not sweeten; there is no application that prayer will not assist the working of. It has a magical influence upon the life. If it does not take away the burden, it increases the strength; if it does not enlarge the print, it increases the light by which we read it. This is the testimony of men—strong men, wise, shrewd, penetrating men, who know the value of words; and they are prepared to stand up and say that but for the power of prayer the night would have been too dark for them, and the wind would have blown them over the brink.

The disciples could do nothing in the case. It is right that there should be limitation on that side. It would never do for the Church to be omnipotent. It would never do for us to reach an ideal faith, because then confusion would follow: If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed ye should say to this mountain, Depart, be removed into the sea, and instantly it would plunge into the deep like a stone thrown by the hand. That is ideal, that touches another region, and falls into the action of another gravitation; but it is along that line that men must climb. See what confusion would arise if every man could say to a mountain, Depart! Because, therefore, it is literally impossible, it is spiritually educative and inspiring. But we must not reason from that circumstance that therefore little faith would do, a crippled Christianity would be enough: Jesus Christ rebuked the disciples, and traced their failure not to their modesty, but to their perversity and faithlessness. We might do more miracles than we accomplish. Where is there a man who might not sit up five minutes later at night to finish the appeal, to complete the letter, to add a last touch to the tender entreaty? Where is there a giver who might not have added something to his donation? Where is the preacher who might not have reached a higher level of inspired eloquence, exposition, and appeal? Where is any life that is not conscious of shortcoming? We might do more. And it would be helpful to us if, having given

our last loaf away, we were obliged by a common hunger all to go to Christ together. Our appearance would be a prayer, and his look would be an answer. Take heart, poor suffering one; at the core of things there is Love. It does not always appear; sometimes, indeed, the appearance is quite to the contrary; sometimes we feel as if we were under discipline that is penal and almost excessive; then we cry out, and no answer comes from the wind that bears our cry away into oblivion: but at other times we get revelations, we see light, and we ought to put down such occurrences and read them as we read the Bible. The Bible does not end upon any given age; it continues itself into the experience of mankind; so much so that a man should come back and say, Isaiah, thou art my companion to-day, I understand thee now. Ezekiel, I have got some hint of thy wheels and colours, thy flashing light, thy mysterious imagery. Job, I will cry with thee to-day; let us lean upon one another and pour out our love in a common psalm. Psalmist, Asaph, David, I can sing to your harps; oh, accompany me whilst I sing the goodness of God. So every life ought to be a comment upon the Scripture. We cannot all comment upon the same book. Some do not understand the book of Genesis, or the book of Revelation; others can make nothing of the historical books, because they are filled with long names, and apparently have no home music in all their polysyllables; but other men can touch even the deepest parts of the Bible, the most mysterious instances of revelation, and all can gather around the Cross.

Here is the ambitious man:—

"Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest" (ver. 46).

How shall the hierarchy be formed? Who shall be first? Which of us shall stand bracketed as equals? Who shall speak the determining word, who shall give the casting vote? Who shall be crowned? When men are left to themselves we see the kind of questions they ask. These are the inquiries men put when they lose hold of the spiritual, the immaterial, the immortal. What conflict then arises, what petty controversy, what contention battling against contention! We need eternity to keep us

up to the true level. That is the great use of religious thinking and religious worship. We cannot always explain the mystery, but we can feel its elevating influence. Whatever enlarges our veneration, quiets our spirit, turns our wonder into a telescope that can search the heavens,—does the soul real good: it is not fanaticism, it is instruction; it is not sentiment, it is the beginning of conduct. When Jesus Christ enters into any conversation, the conversation instantly rises to another level. We know his voice; there is none like it. We all speak much in the same tone, but when Jesus joins the conversation he makes us ashamed of all we have said, and teaches us the beauty, the utility, and the dignity of silence. Whoever multiplies the ceremonial officers of the Church, departs from the spirit of Christ. All high-sounding titles, all ambitious distinctions, all differences in status and in function that imply inferiority on the part of others, were never learned at the Cross of Christ. Whoever makes the ministry a profession, and speaks of a minister as if he were separate from the people, having access to sealed secrets, having a key that can open the arcana of God, does not understand the spirit of Christ. "One is your Master"; all ye are brethren. What distinguishes one brother from another will soon be evident to the brethren themselves, and men have that instinct of recognition and justice which will soon settle all classifications; but purple, and velvet, and crimson, and gold, and gem, and staff of office are unknown to the Cross of Christ.

Quickly following is the sectarian man.

"And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us" (ver. 49).

He thought he had a great message to deliver, and that the Lord would be exceedingly pleased with the news which he brought that day. John did not understand anything about the kingdom of heaven at that time, or he never would have done what he did. Yet still it enables a man to increase his stature by standing upon his toes when he can forbid some other man. Where is there a man who does not enjoy his food all the more since he has the consciousness that he has exercised a little brief authority? There is a pleasure in snubbing other people.

There is a subtle comfort in telling another man to sit down. That is what the sects are doing to one another all the week long. I am not now speaking of denominations, for we must have them to the end of the chapter, as we must have families, households, separate communes; I am speaking now of the sectarian spirit which says, Because you do not worship under my roof, therefore you are not of Christ; because you do not accept my credenda, therefore you are without faith; because you do not call yourself by my name, therefore you cannot be going to the kingdom above. That is the spirit of hate, the spirit of illiberality; let us renounce it with detestation. It is beautiful to see what different views men can entertain. These differences of opinion ought to occasion us delight, when they are held with reverence, and when they are defended with reason. The idea that a man can see differently from me ought to enlarge me, in my thinking, my faith, my hope. When two men pursue the same text and each comes with a conclusion of his own, we should not think of the petty differences between the two men, but of the greatness of the text. It is because Christianity, as we have often said, is so large that men have so many different opinions about it. There are more differences of opinion about a firmament than about a gasometer. It is wonderful how sectarian some people can be. They never travel, and that is an infinite disadvantage. Always to live in the same street, mingling with the same people, going out at the same hour, returning at the same time, speaking always the same language, reading only one class of literature,—why, but what angel could endure it? It is destruction. Men should travel; they should go into countries where they cannot speak a word of the language, to learn how ignorant they are; into countries that are established upon novel lines, and yet are as solid as rocks, to see that things can be done in other lands that are not done at home. Men should often turn themselves as to all their thinking upside down, so as to get hold of a larger view. The artist will tell you that in order to lay hold of the real image and colour of a landscape he puts his head down and looks at the landscape as from below. Any person coming behind him, not understanding art, would of course remark upon the eccentricity of the individual—for some people cannot be eccentric. To the artist it is needful to see the landscape just from that angle, he

sees what cannot be seen from any other angle, and he gets colour and lights that are otherwise impossible of recognition. To think that a man boasts of never having been absent from his own church for forty years! What a ridiculous little man he must be! How exceedingly uncomfortable to live with! I believe in all churches, in all forms of life, in all variations of music. We may pride ourselves on that which ought to be our humiliation; we may belittle the Christianity which we have undertaken to patronise.

Following the sectarian man comes in due sequence the religiously vindictive man:—

"And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" (vers. 51–54.)

You cannot make Eliases. You may do just the very thing that Elias did, and so make the greater fools of yourselves. Elias is sent when the world needs him,—son of thunder, son of consolation, each will be sent from heaven at the right time, and be furnished with the right credentials. But how delightful it is to set fire to somebody else! The dynamitard is a character in ancient history. Would it not be convenient for the Church always to have in its pocket just one little torpedo that it could throw in the way of somebody who differed in opinion from somebody else? The Lord Jesus will not have this; he said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of love, a spirit of sympathy, a spirit of felicity, a spirit that can weep over cities that have rejected the Son of man.

Then said he, or said the historian—the words might be his, for they are part of his very soul—

"For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (ver. 56).

Tell this everywhere. Go ye into all the world and say to every

creature, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." The strongest man amongst us might devote his life to that sweet, high task. The brightest genius that ever revelled in poem or picture might devote all its energies to the revelation of that sacred truth. There are destroyers enough. Nature itself is often a vehement and unsparing destroyer. We are our own destroyers. There needs to be somewhere a saviour, a loving heart, a redeeming spirit, a yearning soul, a mother-father that will not let us die.

NOTE.

"Tetrarch (τετράρχης). Properly the sovereign or governor of the fourth part of a country. In the later period of the republic and under the empire, the Romans seem to have used the title (as also those of *ethnarch* and *phylarch*) to designate those tributary princes who were not of sufficient importance to be called kings. In the New Testament we meet with the designation, either actually or in the form of its derivative τετραρχεῖν, applied to three persons:—

"(1) Herod Antipas (Matt. xiv. 1; Luke iii. 1, 19, ix. 7; Acts xiii. 1), who is commonly distinguished as 'Herod the tetrarch,' although the title of 'king' is also assigned to him both by St. Matthew (xiv. 9) and by St. Mark (vi. 14, 22 *sqq.*). St. Luke, as might be expected, invariably adheres to the formal title, which would be recognised by Gentile readers. Herod is described by the last-named Evangelist (ch. iii. 1) as 'Tetrarch of Galilee'; but his dominions, which were bequeathed to him by his father Herod the Great, embraced the district of Peræa beyond the Jordan (Joseph. *Ant.* xvii. 8, §1): this bequest was confirmed by Augustus (Joseph. *B. J.* ii. 6, § 3). After the disgrace and banishment of Antipas, his tetrarchy was added by Caligula to the kingdom of Herod Agrippa I. (*Ant.* xviii. 7, § 2).

"(2) Herod Philip (the son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra, *not* the husband of Herodias), who is said by St. Luke (iii. 1) to have been 'tetrarch of Ituræa, and of the region of Trachonitis.'

"(3) Lysanias, who is said (Luke iii. 1) to have been 'tetrarch of Abilene,' a small district surrounding the town of Abila, in the fertile valley of the Barada or Chrysorrhoas, between Damascus and the mountain-range of Antilibanus."—SMITH'S *Dictionary of the Bible.*

PRAYER.

Almighty God, thou hearest the prayer of men when spoken in the Name that is above every name, which Name alone do we now breathe in approaching the throne of the heavenly grace. We come by the new and living way, henceforward the only way, and we humbly beseech thee to grant unto us such blessings as our hearts require. We pray for the forgiveness of our sins. God be merciful unto us sinners! We come to the Cross of Jesus Christ our infinitely sufficient Saviour, and there confess our sins, and humbly seek the pardon of God. If we confess our sins, thou wilt surely forgive us. We now make confession of our iniquity, we now speak of our transgressions, that they may be taken away by the blood of the one Sacrifice. Create within us a clean heart, renew within us a right spirit, and give us to know the meaning of holiness as thou dost know it. Purify us by the blood of Jesus, and there shall be no stain upon our hearts or upon our life. Put within us thy Holy Spirit, so as to enlighten the understanding, to regenerate the heart, and sanctify the whole nature; then shall we grow in grace, and shall become beautiful with the purity of God. Let the Holy Ghost descend upon us! Now may we know that he is here by the warmth of our affections, by the loftiness and purity of our desires, and by a holy resolution to give ourselves, body, soul and spirit, to the service of the living Lord. Prepare us to hear the messages of the gospel. May we receive them as good seed cast into good ground. May no word of all the message of thy love escape us. May every tone of the music of the gospel enter into the ear of our hearts and charm our life. May we know thy truth more perfectly, and love it more truly, that men, noting our behaviour, may wonder concerning the sources of our power. We would live in God, we would live according to the law of Jesus Christ. Daily would we carry, with unmurmuring patience and cheerful hope, the Cross of our Lord and Saviour. Direct all the way of our life. Suffer none of our steps to slide; when the wicked, even our enemies and our foes, would come upon us to devour and to destroy, save us in the time of peril. Set our feet upon a rock and hide within our hearts thy word, that we may not sin against thee. We now await thine answer, O living One! We have spoken our prayer at the Cross; we now abide the answer of God. Let it be an answer of peace and love and tender mercy, and our hearts shall burn within us: Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Chapter x. 25.

"And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

INHERITING ETERNAL LIFE.

YOU will observe that the man who asked this question was a lawyer, a man of education and of good standing; a man, therefore, from whom good behaviour and reverence of spirit might reasonably have been expected. You would think that when such a man spoke, he would speak soberly, he would mean, under such circumstances, exactly what he said. You find, however, that the inquiry,—the very greatest that can possibly engage human attention,—was put in a spirit of temptation. The lawyer was not an earnest man. He asked a right question, but he asked it in a wrong spirit. See, then, the possibility of asking religious questions irreligiously. You would suppose, when a man puts a grave religious inquiry, that his spirit is concerned in the meaning of the question which he propounds. Here you see a direct contradiction of that reasonable supposition. A man may be learned and intelligent, may have good social position, and may in many respects deserve the regard and confidence of society, so far as appearances go; and yet he may put the gravest questions in the most flippant and irreverent spirit. Then is it possible for a man to open the Bible without really desiring to know what it contains that can minister to the ignorance of his mind and the hunger of his soul? Truly, alas, it is so possible. Many men attend the house of God, and sit amongst those who profess themselves to be saints, and yet care nothing for the place and nothing for the service, beyond a little momentary excitement or entertainment of some kind or other. Verily so. If men are to be judged religious because they put religious questions, then shall religion become the cheapest exercise of life. Learn the possibility of asking great questions in a merely controversial spirit, without any profoundly anxious desire to know the answer that God will return to such inquiries. We, being present at a religious service, may be supposed to be in a grave mood, to be listening with all intentness for some word that shall touch the hunger and the necessity of our life. Yet it possible, and in some respects even likely, that we may be in a reverent attitude

without a reverent spirit, and asking a religious question without a religious intention. If so, let no man think that he will receive anything of the Lord. God understands the irony of our attitude. The Living One knows whether we are hungering and thirsting for him; he can see through our hypocrisies and concealments, and only into the broken heart and the contrite spirit will he come with redemption and life and helpfulness and grace. We know the conditions upon which alone we receive the revelations of God: That we be quiet, self-renouncing, reverent, sober, anxious about the business; and wherever these conditions are forthcoming, some light will be flashed upon the life, and some healing word will be dropped into the sorrow of the heart.

We look up to certain men for examples. We say we cannot surely be wrong if we follow the type which such men set before us. Probably one would have looked up to the lawyer referred to in the text as a man who could give us an example; and yet here are the so-called pillars of society rotting away; the men who ought to be the trustees of decency proving traitors to their stewardship; men of education and intelligence and standing exerting a pestilent influence upon young and untrained but susceptible life.

"And Jesus said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?" (ver. 26.)

Jesus himself answered one question by asking another; and so he not unfrequently disappointed men who had undertaken to ensnare him in his speech. They thought that if they did but put a case to him he would commit himself, and they would entrap him. Here is a man accustomed to put questions, and to put questions again upon the answers that are given, and so to cross-examine those with whom he came in contact. Jesus undertakes to deal with him according to the spirit which he presents; and before he lets him go he will show what the man's meaning is and his nature, and he will expose him as he never was exposed before. Thus quietly he begins, "What is written in the law? Thou art a lawyer, a man of reading, a man of many letters, and of much understanding probably,—how readest thou?" God has never left the greatest questions of the human heart unanswered. The great answer to this question about eternal life was not given

first of all by Jesus Christ as he appeared in the flesh. Jesus himself referred to the oldest record; inferentially he said,—That question has been answered from the beginning; go back to the very first revelation and testimony of God, and you will find the answer there. Yet the question is put very significantly, "How readest thou?" There are two ways of reading. There is a way of reading the letter which never gets at the meaning of the spirit. There is a way of reading which merely looks at the letter for a partial purpose, or that a prejudice may be sustained or defended. And there is a way of reading which means,—I want to know the truth; I want to see really how this case stands; I am determined to see it. He who reads so will find no end to his lesson, for truth expands and brightens as we study her revelations and her purposes. He who comes merely to the letter, will get but a superficial answer in all probability. It was, therefore, of the highest importance that the lawyer should tell how he had been reading the law.

But before passing from this point let us observe that Jesus Christ never treated the Old Testament lightly. I am afraid that some of us imagine that we have got beyond the Old Testament, and therefore hardly ever turn to its ancient pages. Believe me, the testaments are one: as the day is one—the twilight and the noon-tide, as the year is one—the vernal promise and the autumnal largess—so are the Testaments of God one. And no man can profoundly interpret the New Testament who is not profoundly conversant with the Old. A man will come upon the New Testament from a wrong point altogether, except he come upon it along the line of Moses and the minstrels of Israel and the prophets of Zion. He who comes so will find it to be a New Testament in the best sense; the Old re-pronounced; the Old set forth in a new light, and brought to bear with wider and more vital applications. Have we read the law? Are we really conversant with all the old statements about sin and duty? Do we know the history of human kind as it is written in the Old Testament? If not, we are unprepared for the deepest and truest consideration of the new covenant. Let me, therefore, in passing, urge young men in particular to read the Old Testament through carefully, seriously, minutely, and they will see how marvellously

the way was prepared for the final covenant, which we know by the name of the New Testament.

"And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (vers. 27, 28).

The lawyer, remember, knew the answer at the time when he asked the question. He said, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and all the time the answer was in his own recollection had he but known it. Alas! we do not always turn our knowledge into wisdom. We know the fact, and we hardly ever sublimate the fact into truth. We know the law, and we fail to see that under the law there is the beauty and there is the grace of the gospel. Is there any man to be found amongst us who does not know what to do to inherit eternal life? Is there one who dare say, "If I knew what to do I would do it"? Does not every man's heart say to him, "You know perfectly well what to do and how to do it"? If you ask a question, with a view of misleading your teacher, understand that you must suffer the pain of that sin. Jesus said, "Thou hast answered right." Men can give right answers to great questions, if so be they set themselves really to do so. If the lawyer had returned a blundering or imperfect answer, Jesus would—had the man's spirit been right—have sat down for days together to talk the matter over with him, simply and tenderly as he alone could talk. But the lawyer knew the answer, at the very moment he put the question; and he intended to put the question so adroitly as to escape the application of the answer to his own case. What if at the last this be our condition; if in the winding up of things we venture to say, If we had known the right path we should certainly have taken it! God will show, out of our own mouth, that at the very time we were doing the wrong we perfectly knew the right. I charge every man who hears me, who is not in Christ, with knowing perfectly well what to do; though he may cheat himself, and wrong himself by putting questions, with a view of escaping the application of the answers, or postponing a decision upon the great question.

"This do," said Jesus, "and thou shalt live." What had the

lawyer to do? To love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength, and with all his mind. Love is life. Only he who loves lives. Only love can get out of a man the deepest secrets of his being, and develop the latent energies of his nature, and call him up to the highest possibilities of his manhood. Criticism never can do it; theology never can do it; power of controversy never can do it. We are ourselves, in all the volume of our capacity, and in all the relations of our original creation, only when life becomes love and our whole nature burns with affection towards the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hast thou knowledge? It will not save thee. Art thou well versed in ancient reading upon the deepest theological questions? It will not save thee. Dost thou know the truth when it is spoken? It will not save thee. What then will save a man? The turning of all his knowledge and all his power into love. And upon what object is that love to be concentrated? Upon the Lord God. Then is a man a loving creature in the true and proper sense of the term. The measure of our love is the measure of our life. In proportion as we love God do we live. In the degree of our affections towards purity and truth and holy service are we the heirs of a blessed immortality! Then the question becomes a very practical one. How is it with ourselves? Let us look less at our knowledge and our intellectual capability and our training and our circumstances, and more at the degree of our religious love. The end of the commandment is charity; the summing up of all true law is love. Do we, then, know this mystery of religious love? or is ours a religion that hangs itself upon the outward letter and the ceremonial form?

Then observe that the law goes still further than love to God; it includes love to one's neighbour. Mark the exact expression of the text, "And thy neighbour as thyself." Love of God means love of man. Religion is the divine side of philanthropy; philanthropy is the practical side of religion. We must first be right with God, or we never can be right with man. If we begin by endeavouring to get right with our neighbour, we shall fail. But if we begin by establishing right relations with God, according to the conditions which he himself has laid down, we shall find that

being right with God our whole life is elevated and all social relationships are redeemed from error, and our neighbour is loved with a lofty and pure charity. Was the lawyer satisfied? Read:—

"But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" (ver. 29.) *

It was the question of a sharp man, but not the inquiry of an honest one. Such a question as this does not need to be answered in words. Every man knows in his own heart who his neighbour is; and only he who wishes to play a trick in words, to show how clever he is in verbal legerdemain, will stoop to ask such a question as this. Why did he ask the question? Because he was willing to justify himself. It is precisely there that every man has a great battle to fight, namely—at the point of self-justification. So long as there is any disposition in us to justify ourselves, are we unprepared to receive the gospel. One of the first conditions required of us at the Cross is self-renunciation. If any man shall say, "I think I can defend my behaviour; I am sure I can excuse myself before Almighty God; I know that if opportunity be given to me I can put another face upon things in my life which are regarded as transgressions and shortcomings,"—let a man talk in that tone, and the gospel has nothing to say to him; he has shut the door of his heart upon it. But let him, on the other hand, know that all power of self-redemption is gone out of him; let him know that he can do nothing towards his own recovery in the sight of God; let him be driven to this prayer—all prayers in one—"God be merciful to me a sinner!" and then Calvary is heaven, the Cross is the ladder the head of which rests against the sky!

My reader, why art thou not saved? Because of a desire to justify thyself; because of thy power of self-excuse; because thou hast it yet in thine heart to say that the conduct which is charged with blame may be defended by some species of eloquence, or by some effort of immoral, because degraded, wit. Not until we come to the point of self-renunciation, do we come to the point at which Jesus meets us with all the preciousness and infinite sufficiency of his own atonement!

* See also *post* p. 272.

Jesus was willing to answer the lawyer even here; but he answered him by putting another question. So he proceeded to relate the parable which has come to be known amongst us as the "Parable of the Good Samaritan." Let us take notice of one or two points in that parable. A certain man was wounded upon his way from Jerusalem to Jericho; he was left on the road half dead. There came down the road a certain priest; the priest saw the wounded man, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. See how possible it is for a man to have a great office and a contemptible nature. See how a great name may mean nothing in the way of great service. See even how the holy name, the name of priest, may be associated with an unholy spirit. He passed by on the other side. There are two sides in this human life of ours. There is a side upon which the wounded man lies, and there is a side that is crowded with men who are hurrying upon their various errands—some good, some bad. There is a side in life on which you may find weakness, helplessness, poverty, starvation, and death. You have it in your power to step to the other side and go about your business, on a path more or less clear of everything that can offend your senses,—and the priest chose that other path. The man with the holy name, that ought to have allowed temple or tabernacle or holy service to stand still, till he had redeemed a man who was lying on the verge of the grave,—passed by on the other side; and the Levite followed his example, looked upon the wounded man, and passed on to the opposite road. Then comes this beautiful expression: "But a certain Samaritan." Sometimes we quarrel with the word but. When we hear it we say, Yes, there is a but in every life; there is an if in every statement. Everything seems to be full of sunshine and beauty until we suddenly come to but, and then we expect to turn round the corner and see nothing but gloom and difficulty. Here is a case upon the other side. The light in this instance comes with a but. We turn from the gloom and the ugliness of the scene to look upon an unexpected light, and be charmed by beauty from an unexpected quarter. Mark the boldness of Christ in saying it was a Samaritan who did this. This is an instance of the Saviour's courage. It required a bold, true, brave man to say even this simple word under the conditions which surrounded the speaker. He was addressing the

Jews; he himself was a Jew; the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. The Samaritans were on the gloomy side, and more or less proscribed. Yet Jesus, Son of God, talking to a Jewish lawyer, said, It was a Samaritan who did the noble deed! We cannot overpass these incidental touches without remarking upon them. We must pause here, to see how even casually there comes in the divinity which was ever present, and showed itself occasionally in great breadths of lustre, and almost constantly in those little flashes and touches which make up so much of our common daily life. Jesus was the Son of man, and therefore he spoke well of whatever good was done by any child of Adam. He was a Jew, but a Jew for a moment only. He was the Son of man and the Son of God, and therefore, whether in favoured or proscribed circles he saw aught of nobleness or moral beauty, he commended it with a generosity which came of the perfectness of his own nature.

When the lawyer had heard the parable, a question was put to him, and he answered again rightly. So that all the time the lawyer knew the answers to the very questions he was putting. You observe he got nothing out of Jesus Christ that he himself did not before know. The Saviour simply put the case to him, and got him to answer upon it. You might have expected, when the question was put, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" an elaborate exposition of the moral condition of humanity, a profound and intricate statement concerning the revelation of God in the flesh, a magnificent dissertation upon redemption by sacrifice, and the necessity of the shedding of blood for the remission of sin. Instead of these expectations being satisfied, Jesus Christ asked the man certain questions which he answered rightly, and those answers were returned to him as a response to his own inquiries. This ought to have a very serious application to ourselves; because we are to be no longer self-deluded by the impression, that if more was said to us we should do more; if we had a better minister we should soon have higher knowledge of truth and keener perception of moral beauty; if revelation had been more minute and specific, we should have had the advantage of that minuteness and should have been better men. To talk so is to talk lies,—infamous and unpardonable lies! Jesus

Christ showed in this case, that all the while there was in the man's heart the very answer which he professed himself eager to ascertain. So it is with ourselves. We know the right; yet oftentimes, alas! the wrong pursue. We know the truth, and we hoodwink ourselves to a degree which enables us to say, lyingly, that if we knew its meaning better we should carry out its purpose more fully. O man, the answer is in thine heart; the law of God has been before thine eyes, and thou hast known it to be true, to be simple, to be right; now say that though you know the truth you will not follow it, or say, "Knowing the truth I yield myself to its persuasion, I put myself under its discipline." Decide at once. Decide ere it be too late! Begin to live whilst you may! If you have not this life in your heart you are not living. You are alive without life; you have existence without being; a pulse without immortality! Where in all this is the evangelical element? It is possible for men, who do not distinguish between words and things, to be surprised at the answer which Jesus returned to the lawyer, because they do not see in that answer the full statement of what is known amongst us as evangelical truth. The lawyer came for eternal life, and he was referred to the law. The lawyer asked who his neighbour was, and he was told to do as the Samaritan had done and he would certainly live. Read the Sermon on the Mount, and say, Where is the evangelical truth? It is precisely here that a profound mistake is often made by men. Let any man try to carry out literally and morally the Sermon on the Mount, and he will soon find where the evangelical element is. Let a man set himself when he is smitten on the one cheek to turn the other also, patiently and nobly, and he will soon begin to inquire for the Cross of Christ! When a man is compelled to go one mile, and is able to answer he will go two—he will find that he derives his ability so to reply from his being one with Christ, in all the sympathies of his nature and all the desires of his heart. Let a man try to love his neighbour as himself, and he will soon find that all his attempts will end in ignominious failure if he have not drunk into the spirit of Jesus Christ, who made himself of no reputation, who took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death. The evangelical element is not a matter of mere statement. It goes beyond all expression; it

never can be set fully forth in any words that man can employ. Yet in all our endeavours to carry out a truly noble and heavenly life, we feel that we cannot take one step in the process without knowing Christ alike in the fellowship of his sufferings and the power of his resurrection. Am I to suppose that any man is asking, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? Do not misunderstand that word "do." It may be so employed as to convey a wrong sense. The obtaining of eternal life does not come through any action or merit of our own. There is not a certain journey that is to be taken, a labour which is to be performed, a specific duty that is to be discharged. What, then, is there to be? Consciousness of sin, conviction of guilt in the sight of God, self-despair, self-torment, such a knowledge of the nature and reality of sin as will pain the heart to agony; and then a turning of the eyes of faith to the bleeding Lamb of God, the one Sacrifice, the complete Atonement; a casting of the heart, the life, the hope, upon the broken body of Jesus, Son of God! Dost thou so believe? Thou hast eternal life! This eternal life is not a possession into which we come by-and-by. We have hold of it now; for to love the Son of God is to begin eternity, is to enter upon immortality!

How is this life to be exhibited? In other words, how is it to prove its own existence and defend its own claim? By love. "But I can talk theology so well." So you may, and yet be an alien to the commonwealth of Israel. "But I can give critical distinctions between one statement and another." So you may, and be a fool. How then am I to show that I am living the eternal life? By love. God is love. And if we be in God we shall be filled with love. Say a man is narrow, censorious, unkind, cruel; and whatsoever may be his attainments, without charity, he is as a beast in the sanctuary of God! But see a man who knows but little, and yet whose heart burns with love towards God, and with a desire to know him more perfectly, and serve him more devotedly, and you see eternal life.

Let us then henceforward know that there is in our hearts and minds information enough upon these great questions, if so be we are minded to turn that information to account. Let no man say,

he will begin a better life when he knows more. Begin with the amount of your present knowledge. Let no man delude himself by saying that, if he had a good opportunity of showing charity to a stranger, he would show it. Show charity, show piety at home. Let no man say that if he was going down a thief-haunted road, and saw a poor man bleeding and dying there, he would certainly bind up his wounds. Do the thing that is next thee; bear the cross that is lying at thy feet; start even upon the very smallest scale to love, and thou shalt grow in grace. We do not expect men in Christ to be men in one day, fully grown, finally completed. We expect growth, process: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. First, a rude attempt, it may be poorly and clumsily carried out, but done with the best spirit, with the highest desire to be right. Given such a condition of affairs as that, and God will see to it that the bruised reed be not broken; that the smoking flax be not quenched; that a little strength be cultured and reared and defended until it become a gigantic power. And as for those of us who are in Christ, and who know this sweet mystery of eternal life, let us prove it by the depth, the ardour, the purity of our love.

Chapter x. 26.

"How readest thou?"

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE.

NOTHING would seem simpler than to open the Bible and read the verses as they came. Few people read the Bible. Many people make a charm of it; others approach it along false lines. Some treat the Bible superstitiously; it is not a divine revelation to them, but something about which they have to be mystified, and they suppose that the less they understand it the better. "How readest thou?" What is the method of reading? Have you any general principles, any guiding maxims, any philosophy of reading? Do you merely pass through chapter and verse as they come, accepting everything, testing nothing, proving nothing, but simply reading so many words, and extending towards these words so much of unintelligent respect as you may care to bestow upon them? How read you your own children's letters? Are they only a jingle of words, or is there some central meaning even in the child's communication? What is the vital point? what does the writer want to be at? what is the one thing to which he addresses himself? Except we consider these questions, and reverently obey the direction in which they point, we shall read the Bible mistakenly, we shall constantly be in fear of every assault that is made upon it; we shall suppose, with criminal ignorance, that it is in the power of some man mighty in dialectics and rich in information to take the Bible from us. There is a certain kind of Bible we ought never to have had. No man can take any revelation of God from us, if our spirit be in sympathy with the revelation, and if our life be moulded and inspired by its highest meaning. Men can rearrange chapters and verses, and dispute authorships, and point out discrepancies; and when they have done all that, they have not touched the Bible. When the Churches learn this there

will be greater calmness in the midst of all uproar and tumult, and a noble voice will say, We will be calm in God, for he is our refuge and strength, though the mountains be removed and be carried into the midst of the sea.

"How readest thou?" Take the first chapters in Genesis, and how many people have been hindered and injured and upset and mystery-beclouded and befogged by those chapters, when they need not have been so troubled for a moment. The people who thus suffer begin at the wrong point; they look for the wrong thing; they would not read a friend's letter as they read what they suppose to be God's Bible. All this comes from want of asking, What is the vital point? It is thus we must read a parable, and with this illustration I will begin at the difficulty I have referred to. How do you read the parable of the Prodigal Son? There is only one line in it. So many people begin with the decoration, the colouring, the poetry; they do not see that the whole thing is in one sentence—Come back! Suppose men were to say, On what day in the week is it probable that that young man went away? There are seven days in the week, and every day would have its friend in that controversy, and so we should have seven different schools of thought based on distinct and dogmatic conviction—that he went away upon every one of them. Suppose they should say, On what day is it probable the young man came back again? Would they be discussing the parable? would they be reading God's Book? would they be students of Christ's religious philosophy? They would lose everything by beginning at the wrong point, and looking for the wrong thing: the one cry of the parable is: Return! thy father waits for thee. So in the creation of the world, what troubles we have: one school setting up the idea of specific creation; another setting up the theory of evolution, development, the whole apocalypse of the universe coming out of some tuft of fire-mist by persistent force. I do not care which it was; that is not the thing the Bible wants me to believe or cares about for one moment. What is it the Bible says? "God created." That's all. I do not give up the first chapters of Genesis any more than I give up the parable of the Prodigal Son, because I do not care what day the young man went away, or on what day the young man returned

home; nor do I care how the feast was spread and who served it; I know he came home, and I want to follow him as he hastens to his father's refuge. All the Bible wants me to believe is, that "God created the heavens and the earth." As for the rest, all that will come in due time; we shall have space enough for the consideration of these questions when we get higher, where the light burns more steadily, where the day is master of the night. Yet there are some people who will knock at doors that are marked *Private*. You cannot get rid of intruders, trespassers, and vulgar people; they rush in where angels fear to tread. He who believes that "God created the heavens and the earth" is ready for any theory that can vindicate itself by reason, fact, history, and other stable proof. How troubled some have been about the tragedy of Eden! "How readest thou?" You may have been attacking the wrong points; puzzling yourselves to dizziness over things you have nothing to do with. The serpent betrayed the woman, and she did eat. How did the serpent betray her? You have nothing to do with that. How readest thou, then? I read only one thing in all that Eden transaction, namely, that the human heart was tempted. All history confirms that reading, our own consciousness bears us witness there; let all the rest stand for scrutiny in other days and other places; far away there stands the one grand awful fact that the human heart disobeyed God, ate, and has since evermore been eating things that are bad for it. If men would confine themselves to the vital point, and not trouble themselves about things that are collateral, subsidiary, and merely meant for minor purposes, they would love the Bible. It speaks the right word, it alone has the truth, and "in the process of the suns" every theory will come to offer gold and frankincense and myrrh to the right thought in Genesis.

"How readest thou?" Let us go to Sinai. Shall we consider about the thunders and the lightnings, the personality of the legislator, and shall we ask how Moses wrote the law, or whether God wrote it with his own finger, and in what language he wrote, and how the symbols looked to the uninitiated eye? These are not questions fit for us; we are earnest men. What is the question? The question is, Has there been any distinction made

between right and wrong? The answer is in the law. Whoever wrote it, there it is. It is written on stones, and stars; on flowers, on hearts; this truth lies at the basis of secured society; without this we could not live. Shall we discuss about the number of the commandments, the order in which they were given? Shall we begin to wonder how it is there were not more or there were not less? Then were we frivolous, then would we give up all that is worth holding; but who will give up this great fact, that there has been made a distribution of moralities, there has been a classification of things right, things wrong? You cannot get rid of that Sinai; it is in your houses, it is in your nurseries, it is in your schools, it is in your houses of business; it is the very life of civilisation; it is the guarantee of property, it is the sanction under whose protection human life is sacred. "How readest thou?" Thou hast been pottering about a thousand things that do not belong to the subject. Any human author, distinctively so-called and known, treated as the Bible is treated, could not stand for a moment, if there were aught in him of poetry, high thinking, far-reaching suggestion: the mechanic might live—the artist would be killed.

"How readest thou?" How many have been troubled about the wars and the destruction of the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Amorites and Jebusites, and how they wondered how all this could take place as it did! That is not the point. You miss the author's meaning. "How readest thou?" We should so read all these mysteries as to see that there is a meaning in the ages, a shaping, directing power,—call it Fire-mist if you like, if you prefer that to Deity; have your idol; call it Chance, if in that syllable there be more poetry than in the syllable God; keep your little pet, and gorge him till he die: we call history Providence, the shaping out of God's kingdom the onward line that aims at and will terminate in righteousness; and Hivite, Perizzite, Canaanite, and all other opposing forces must go down. Nor is this an outworking of divine purpose, as if that were something arbitrary, far away, metaphysical, and impossible of human conception. God has no interests inconsistent with human welfare. That is the key of the whole position. If yours be an ivory god, I do not know what he may do, I will not be responsible for him;

my God is Father, royal Father, everlasting Father; his name is Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace: and there poetry may take licence, and write the firmament with the choicest epithets descriptive of majesty, patience, tenderness, and love. *That* God has no interests inconsistent with the salvation of the child that was born an hour ago. *That* God is working out nothing that does not contemplate the good of the meanest vagrant that disgraces our civilisation. So there are those who are hard of mouth because hard of heart, who talk about God as if he were working out something far away in the clouds that man has nothing to do with, and man must be crushed and ground to powder that that mighty Invisible may have his way. It is a lie; God is love; God is thinking about every man, woman, and child when he is working his mighty way; yea, when he whets his glittering sword and his hand takes hold of judgment, even then God is love. We cannot tell all the mystery of the action of love; it has a side that is marked by chastening, discipline, trial, loss. Our God is a consuming fire, but at the last it will be found that he has consumed nothing that even he could save.

"How readest thou?" At the Cross, how readest thou? How many theories of the atonement we have! How many theological hairsplittings and metaphysics we have seen around the Cross by blasphemers who thought they were praying! There is but one meaning in that Calvary transaction: what is that meaning, all-inclusive, all-explaining? It is that the world is redeemed. If you add one line to that your addition is subtraction; if you begin to theorise and speculate and dogmatise you are lost. We only dogmatise when we are fat and prosperous and self-conceited; when we are self-convicted, penitent, contrite, broken-hearted, blind with tears, we seize great meanings, and when language fails we express ourselves in mighty cries of love. Have nothing to do with theorists and theological mechanicians, and people who have plans and schemes of God. God is love; the meaning of the Cross is, The world is redeemed, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, as of a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Pilate writes in Greek and Latin and Hebrew, but above all the super-

scription there is written the true meaning—God so loved the world that he did this—he died for it. Do not be as a beast in the sanctuary, trampling upon things that ought to be taken up and reverently treasured in the heart. Do not seek for meanings in words; words are deceptions, words are mockeries, words are either infirmities or falsehoods. It is the heart that knows. There is no word-ladder that can reach even unto heaven, but there is a heart-power that wings its way unerringly through all the clouds, and finds the father-mother God.

How readest thou, finally, in the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians respecting the resurrection? We have actually had volumes written on the resurrection! The whole doctrine is in one line, like every other doctrine of the Bible—the doctrine is, we shall not die. There is a power mightier than death; the sting of death is for a moment, and the victory of the grave is for the twinkling of an eye; the grave will not be able to felicitate itself upon its victory until it is crushed by the resurrection. But some man will say, Just so. Paul anticipated the whole of the fussy-mindedness of the theological genius, whether it be a genius of affirmation or of denial. But some man will say, How? You cannot get rid of that "some man" with his little questions and foolish peddling inquiries. As if God could always come into a "how," and live there; as if there were room enough in a human "how" or a human "why" to tabernacle the Infinite. Thus we believe in the Resurrection; we believe in Creation, we believe in Law, we believe in Providence, we believe in Redemption, we believe in Resurrection. If we could get hold of the central thought, the living, vital principle, how few infidels there would be! Infidels are made by details. Infidels are all born on some sort of theologico-colonial line away out yonder. If there are scoffers, mockers, profane persons, we have nothing to say in their defence; but if there are persons who have been puzzling themselve with externals and collaterals and subsidiaries, my purpose in this exposition is to ask such to find rest in central thought and in vital conception. Never think that words can express God. Theology, falsely so called, has done itself mortal injury by picking out a few words or many, and calling them final. There

are no final words. All words are alphabetic or symbolic. Do not suppose that the ripest student in God's sanctuary is able to comprehend God or tell all about God. It is his joy that he cannot find out the Almighty unto perfection. But there is room in history for prayer; there is scope in reverent distance to see many aspects of the divine movement that derive not a little of their beauty and their fascination from the very perspective into which they are thrown. Here, then, amid all tumult and controversy and conflict, is a man who holds to the Bible; and he holds to it because of its vital points, and he beats off the rude hands that would seek to take to pieces the mere decoration of the work. Your child is not its clothes, the clothes are not the child; within it, and within it still, further, further, is the real child. So the depredator comes and takes away in the night-time much that I used to think essential; but I find that it is not essential, because I can live without it, pray without it, do good without it, suffer heroically without it, and be like God without it. What has the thief taken? What he is welcome to. He cannot take away from me the doctrine that God created the heavens and the earth, though I know not how; the doctrine that man is tempted and disobedient, I cannot tell by what mystery of evil; nor can there be taken from me the distinction between right and wrong, thou shalt and thou shalt not; nor can there be taken from me the conviction that life is ruled, shaped, directed, inspired, and not the sport of chance. No man can take away from me the doctrine that the world is redeemed; and as for death I mock it, taunt it, call it grim, lean, ghastly, hungry, and ask it, O death, where is thy sting? because of a conviction regarding rising again, ultimate triumph, the final conquest of life over death. Think on these things. Comfort one another with these words.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we approach thee in the name of Jesus Christ, thy Son our Saviour, who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. We see not the Infinite, but we see Jesus. We see not thy glory, but we see thy goodness; and so far as thou hast enabled us to behold Jesus Christ in all the wondrousness of his beauty and holiness, we are constrained to exclaim, each for himself, "My Lord and my God!" We rest in Jesus Christ,—he is our peace; he has answered the demand of law; he has broken down the middle wall of partition which separated us from God, and he hath made God and man one in holiness and in love. We have come to consider his gospel. To every one of us may it be good news from heaven. May we recognise the utterance of it as the only music that should charm the heart and appeal to the love of man. Enable us to know the sinfulness of sin, that we may the more clearly understand thy love in the gift of thy Son. Help us in this hour to be sincere worshippers. May our hearts be bowed down before the Holy One, and may our souls know their hunger and be able to express it in earnest urgent prayer. Let thy Spirit be given unto each hearer, as a spirit of life, of interpretation, of comfort, of stimulus; that this hour spent in this place may enable us to go in the strength of its memories many days. Dry the tears of our sorrow; uphold us in the day of sore distress; find bread for us in the time of famine; and when we are in the desert make pools for us. Thou art able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. We leave, therefore, in the Name that is above every name, this poor prayer at thy footstool, for surely thy grace will turn it into a great answer. Amen.

Chapter x. 29.

"But he, willing to justify himself, said ——"

SELF-JUSTIFICATION.

MY intention is to examine some of the excuses which men make in this matter of the religious life; to ascertain some of the causes or reasons which keep men back from entireness of consecration and completeness of Christian love. If the excuses are good, verily I shall embrace them myself, and repeat them with you, and help to heighten the thunder in which you speak them, when you are called upon to avow the reason of your indifference or of your opposition. If they be bad excuses, and

if they will not stand fire, I shall ask you to renounce them, to disclaim them, to be ashamed of them, and, as far as possible, to do double work in the future, to make up, in some degree, for the negligence or wastefulness of the past.

"The lawyer said——" Then comes his own particular plea or excuse, to which I intend to pay little or no attention now, it was so completely and triumphantly answered by Jesus Christ. Read his parable in reply. Next to the parable of the Prodigal Son, it is the sweetest word ever spoken even by the lips of Jesus Christ. I intend each man to fill up the sentence for himself, only having from the lawyer the preface: "He, willing to justify himself, said——" What words do you insert after the word "said"? How is it with your self-justifying and self-excusing heart? Do I hear correctly when I say you are now reasoning thus: "If I am sincere in my spirit and convictions, no matter whether I believe what is in the Bible or not, all will be well with me here and hereafter"? Is that a correct statement of what you are now thinking? It sounds well. I admit, with all candour, that it seems to sound conclusive and to admit of no refutation. Yet it surely will admit of a question or two being put, in order that we may fully understand the position. You speak of sincerity. I ask, What are you sincere in? Does anything turn upon the object of your sincerity? If you are sincerely giving to a customer over your counter what you believe to be the thing he has asked for, will you be fully justified in the day that you find you have poisoned the man? You sincerely believed that you were giving him precisely the very ingredient that he asked for, and that he had paid for, but you did not give him that ingredient, but something else, and ere the sun go down the man will be dead. What does sincerity go for there? If you indicate to a traveller, sincerely, to the best of your knowledge, the road along which he ought to go to reach a certain destination; if it be the wrong road, and if in some sudden darkness the man should fall over a precipice, will your sincerity obliterate everything like self-reproach? Were you sure it was the road? "No, but I was sincere in thinking it was." Did you explain to the man that you were speaking upon an assumption? "No, I thought there was no occasion to do so, I felt so sure." But you see that the mere

element of sincerity goes a very short way in cases of that kind. We love sincerity. Without sincerity life is but a mockery, the worst of irony! But what are we sincere in? Have we ascertained that the object of our sincerity is real, true, and deserving of our confidence? We are responsible not only for the light we have, but for the light we may have. It sounds very well, I have no doubt, to some young men, when a man says, "I intend to walk according to the light I have, and to take the consequences." Believe me, the man who so speaks talks in mock heroics. There is nothing in his statement that ought to deter you from investigation, or from anxious and devout pursuit of truth. I repeat, we are responsible not only for the light we have, but for the light that is offered to us. If you go into some dark chamber, and say you can find your way about well enough, and I offer you a light before you enter the apartment and you refuse it, and trust to your own power to grope your way in the dark; if you should fall into some mischief or be tripped up or thrown down, so as to injure yourself, who will be to blame? You walked according to the light you had, but the light that was in you was darkness! Your injury will be associated with a memory of neglect on your part, which, when the injury itself is healed, will yet be a sting in your recollection and your heart. Am I speaking, then, one word against sincerity? Certainly not. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. I am speaking about that degree of sincerity which might be increased, and that quality of sincerity which might be enriched, by knowing more perfectly the object upon which it is terminating. Who are you, that you should be a revelation to yourself? Look at the mistakes of your lifetime and shut your self-written Bible. He ought to be a very wise man who can, gracefully and with aught of authoritativeness, close the Book of God and say, "I can do without it." He may be speaking sincerely, but he is speaking ignorantly. There is a sincerity of fanaticism, as well as a sincerity of philosophy. There is a sincerity of ignorance, as well as a sincerity of knowledge. Merely, therefore, to say, "I am sincere," is to say nothing. We must inquire, What is the object on which your sincerity fixes itself? What is the degree of its intelligence, and what is the degree of its conscience? When any man has

returned clear earnest answers to these inquiries, my belief is, that he will find himself short of something, and that that something which is absent will be found to be the truth as it is in Jesus,—the Cross, the one Cross, out of which every other cross that is true and useful must be made!

But he, willing to justify himself, said—"I have been looking round, and it strikes me that I am every whit as good as other people that are about me." Would it be rude to contradict you? Will it be polite to admit the truthfulness, generally, of what you say? Either on the one hand or the other it does not touch the point at all. If the question lay between you and me, it would be right for each to compare himself with the other, and to exalt his superiority at the expense of his brother's infirmities. The case is not as between one man and another. We err in circumscribing the question so. The question is between the soul and God; between the heart and the absolutely right; between man and Jesus Christ; between right and wrong. How does the case stand when viewed thus? We injure ourselves by comparing ourselves one with another; setting shoulder to shoulder, and saying, "My stature is as high as yours;" laying hand beside hand, and saying, "My fingers are as clean as the fingers of other men." We are to come to the law and to the testimony; we are to proceed to the Cross of Jesus Christ; we are to go to the standards and balances of the sanctuary; we are to shut ourselves up with God, alone! He who can then boast, must be a madman or a devil! There is a disposition, I know, amongst us all, and exercised more or less, to compare ourselves with one another. One flippant and cruel man will say, looking upon a number of professing Christians, who may not exactly have been pleasing him, "Well, if this is your Christianity, I don't think I shall have much to do with it." All the while he knows, perfectly well, that the men who have been doing anything wrong have been so doing, not because of their Christianity, but because of their want of it, or in spite of it. A man looks over a lot of copper and sees one bad penny in it, and says, "Well, if this is your currency, I do not think I shall have anything to do with it." What do you think of that man? Would you introduce him to your family? Would you make him the tutor of your boys?

Would you in any way express esteem for him? A man goes into your orchard and picks up a rotten apple and says, "Well, if these are your apples, I don't think I shall have much to do with them." What do you think of him? Do you say, "He is an admirable man; a sagacious creature; a counsellor to be consulted"? You turn aside, and you say, "The man must be a fool." Not that I am going to say so about you on these solemn questions. But shall I say to you this?—When you compare yourself with another man, especially to your own advantage, you are not in the spirit which is likely to elicit the truth and lead you to sound and useful conclusions. Your disposition is wrong; your temper is wrong. You must cease such a method of comparing advantages and honours, and must go to the absolute and final standard of righteousness.

But he, willing to justify himself, said—"Though I do not believe and act as they do who call themselves Christians, yet I trust to the mercy of God." The man who makes this plea talks in some such fashion as this: "I do not care for doctrines; I do not care for churches; theologies trouble me very little indeed; if I live as wisely as I can, and do what is tolerably fair between one man and another, I shall trust to the mercy of God, and I believe all will be right at last." Do you know what you are talking about in talking so? Do you understand the value and the force of your own words? Are you aware that the word mercy is one of the words in our language which it is very difficult to understand? What is mercy? In your estimation, perhaps, it is mere physical sensibility, simple emotion—a gush of feeling. Is that mercy? No. What is mercy? The highest point of justice,—justice returning and completing itself by the return. Mercy is justice in tears. Mercy is righteousness with a sword just transforming itself into a sceptre. Is mercy a mere freak of sentimentality? Do you think God will say at last, "Well, well, come in, come in, and say nothing more about it"? I would not go into his heaven if the conditions were such. It would be no heaven. Where there is not righteousness at the centre, there is no security at the circumference. Where the throne is not founded upon justice, mercy is but a momentary impulse, to be followed by a terrible recoil.

"The mercy of God," you say, "where do I find the mercy of the Living One?" I find it in Bethlehem, in Gethsemane, on Calvary. Where is the mercy of God? It is in that dying Son of his, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. Your notion of mercy is superficial. You use the great word in one of its aspects only; you do not seem to understand that the word mercy is a composite word, that has within itself many elements. As peace is not death, mercy is not sentiment. You propose to trust to the mercy of God. So do I, but in a different sense. Is it right to trifle with his law, to despise his word, to crucify his Son afresh, and then to say, "I will trust to his mercy at last"? Is that decent, fair, honourable, sensible? We are all living, in so far as we are living truly, in the mercy and grace of God. We trust to his mercy now. The question is not one of ultimate conditions, but of present experiences. Every morning we hallow the day with this prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner!' and every night we recover the mistakes, the infirmities, and the sins of the daytime with this cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" What do you mean, then, when you talk about trusting to his mercy at last? Trust to his mercy at first. Where is his mercy? It is in the life, the ministry, the death, the resurrection, and the whole mediation of Jesus Christ.

But he, willing to justify himself, said,—"There is so much mystery about religion that I cannot really attempt to understand it." I answer, There is mystery about religion, but there is ten thousand times more mystery without it. There is mystery with the Bible, but there is nothing but mystery without it. There is a mystery of grace; yes, and there is a mystery of sin. Life is a mystery. All that is great touches the mysterious. In proportion as a thing rises from vulgarity and commonplace, it rises into wondrousness,—and wondrousness is but the first round in the ladder whose head rests upon the infinite mysteries. Understand it! Who asked you to understand it? You make a mistake if you suppose that religion is to be understood in the sense that you apparently attach to the word understand. It is to be understood by the heart, to be felt as the answer to the sorrow of the soul, to be understood through the medium of love

and sympathy, and not through the medium of dry intellect Do I understand the method of salvation? No. Can I explain it intellectually, so as to chase away every lingering shadow of mystery? No. What then? I feel it to be right. My heart says, "Though you have often brought me bread I could not eat; you have now brought me this bread,—and it is life!" I cannot give the lie to my own heart. Would I part with the mystery? Nay, verily. Are not the clouds God's as well as the blue sky? Are not the mists around the mountain tops his, as well as the bases of the mountains and the foundations of the earth? Is not he, himself, the living God, the culmination of all mysteries, the sum of all wonder—the Alpha and the Omega—not to be understood, but loved and served? There is a point in my religious inquiries where I must close my eyes, look no more, but rest myself in the grand transaction which is known as faith in the Son of God.

But he, willing to justify himself, came at last to this: "There are so many denominations of Christians that it is impossible to tell which is right and which is wrong." Think of a man going off on that line! Think of a man saying, that he has been looking round and sees that there are so many denominations, that really he has made up his mind to give up the whole thing! Does he know what he is talking about? Is he really serious when he speaks so? Shall I follow his example? If I do it will be to show how great is his folly. "I have been looking round, and see so many different regiments in the country that really it is impossible to tell which is right and which is wrong, and I do not think I shall have anything to do with the country." Yes, there are many regiments, but one army; many denominations, but one church; many creeds, but one faith; many aspects, but one life; many ways up the hill, but one Cross on the top of it. Do not lose yourself among the diversities, when you might save yourself by looking at the unities. "There are so many mountains about, that I really do not know that there can be any truth in geography." Many mountains—one globe! There are a great many denominations, and I do not regret it. I believe that denominationalism, wisely managed, may be used for mutual provocation to love and to good works. It may be better that

we should be broken up externally, that each may do his own work in his own way, than that we should be bound together by merely nominal uniformity. When an enemy arises to make an attack upon the Christian citadel, when he writes a book against Christ, or against the Bible, or against any aspect of Christian truth—who answers him? Not one denomination in particular. No. When a hand is lifted up against the Cross, who seizes it? Not one section of Christendom. No. When an assault is made upon Calvary, the whole Church, in all colours, all attitudes, rushes to protect—what indeed requires no defence except as a sign of love—the Cross of Christ, which sets itself above the storms and outlives the puny assaults of puny men!

I have looked into all the excuses that I could find, and verily I now pronounce them, so far as my intelligence will enable me to judge—rubbish! Is that word understood? It is my business, as well as the business of every man, to understand really what excuses are made of; what the value of self-justification is. Because I am as anxious to be right, I trust, as most other men; and having examined all these grounds of self-justification, I say I would not risk so much as a day's health upon them, not to speak of an immortal condition. There is not one of them will hold good in the market-place if it were commercialised. Shall any one of them stand good as between us and God? If, then, there is not to be self-justification, what is there to be? Self-renunciation. A man must empty himself of himself before he is in the right condition to understand lovingly and gratefully the offer which Jesus Christ makes men. So long as there is, in the remotest chambers of his mind, anything like the shade of a shadow of a supposed reason to imagine himself in any degree right, he is not in a position to consider the offers of mercy. Who receives the Eternal One as guest and friend? Name him. Hast thou heard his name? Tell it. His name is a broken-hearted man! God guests with the contrite and companies with the self-renouncing soul. I will go to my Father, then, and will say unto him, not, "Father, I was tempted; somebody lured me away; I did not intend to leave thee, but I was beguiled;" but I will say unto him, "Father, I have sinned!"

This, then, is the ground of coming to God; the ground of self-denial, self-renunciation, self-distrust, self-hatred on account of sin. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Jesus cried and said, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Who accepts the invitation? Some have accepted it. Pray that this word may not be in vain. Some require just one more appeal, and they will decide. Take this, then, as the appeal you want. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. I want to see men decide for Christ. I want to know that men who have been thinking so long, have at last been enabled by the Spirit of God to say, "I will cast myself on Jesus, the one Saviour of a sinful race." Our fathers used to plead for decisions. The men who made the pulpit of England the grandest of its powers—pleaded with sinners that they would decide. If aught of their mantle has fallen upon me, even but for the occasion, I would speak with all their voices, now dead; I would stand upon their dead bones and turn their graves into a pulpit, and cry, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "How long halt ye between two opinions?" I am not the one speaker; all the holy dead speak in my voice; the general assembly and church of the first-born written in heaven; your dead pastors, your sainted fathers and mothers, all the companions of your life who have passed away into the other world, all prophets and apostles, make me their mouthpiece when I say, Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation!

Chapter xi. 42.

"Ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God."

PIOUS AT THE WRONG PLACES.

IN other words, you are pious at the wrong places. That is the point. It applies to us all. We think we make up for lack of the right, and complete piety by fussing about a thousand things that are secondary, subordinate, and hardly of any consequence. Thus man writes his poor programme of service. He has his little fads and likings and prejudices, and if you will allow him to cobble away at these he thinks he is about as good as anybody else. When men work according to their prejudice they are not working at all in the sight and love and acceptance of God. They are working on their own account, for their own purposes, with their own wishes in view; they are fools, and blind, and it requires the Son of God to tell them this in the right tone. What they are doing has its own importance if set in the right perspective,—"these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." If you carefully examine men's Christian life and Christian profession you will find they are doing the little things they like to do. They have not attained the dignity of sacrifice. They like to go to church, they like to hear good music, they like the general society of the Christian congregation. That is the fatal word—they "like." When we are doing the things we like, we are doing nothing. That has to be broken down; that bad root has to be gotten right out of us; every fang and fibre of it has to come out, and to be thrown into the fire. So long as people only do the things they like to do, they are in danger of supporting their little prejudices by a loud invocation addressed to their own consciences. There are points at which there should be a general conscience; that general conscience will only occupy its right sphere and exert its right

influence in proportion as the individual conscience is watched and cultivated and sanctified. There should, however, be times when men give up their little likings, their small, drivelling prejudices, and unite with the infinite stream of devotional and noble sentiment.

We may do the little without doing the great. That is the mischief; and we may so do the little as to imagine that we are doing the great, which is the still deeper and more fatal mischief. Men like to keep their piety well under their hand, so that they can take it up and set it down and manipulate it with perfect ease; then it is no real piety, for true piety is discipline, aspiration, discontent with present achievement, and determination to conquer some loftier, sunnier altitude. "I count not myself to have apprehended," said the chiefest of us, the mightiest runner in the race, the stoutest champion in the war. We cannot do the great without doing the little. That is the beautiful relation and issue of things in Christian life and experience. We cannot pay attention to "judgment and the love of God," and allow the little taxations to escape notice. This is how Christ would work; this is the programme of Christianity. It says, Get the people to do the great things, and then they will surely do the little things in due time and turn. Christianity addresses itself to vitalities, not to accidents and externalities. Christianity is the spiritual religion; the book it carries is the sword of God, quick and powerful, mightier than any two-edged sword ever forged by human hands. It makes its way into the innermost parts of life, and by war brings peace into the soul. Does Christianity trouble itself about washing hands, and tithing mint and rue and all manner of herbs? Not at all. Is Christianity a little reformer going up and down in the world, seeing where it can patch up broken walls and repair broken glass? Nothing of the sort. Has Christianity any little detailed platform of reformation? None, none. Then how can Christianity get at the habits of the people? By getting at their hearts. Christianity is not a little outside day-labourer, who comes for an eight-hours' spell at the dilapidation of human life; Christianity is the spirit of love, which is the spirit of God, and it does not begin its work until it gets into the heart; its watchword is, Behold I stand at the

door and knock; I cannot begin outside, the ruin is not external, I must start from the innermost core and root of things, and work my way to circumferences and outlying relations and engagements. How does Christianity address itself to the health of the people? Through the heart. Of course the little fussy reformer goes in at once for an immediately new and absolutely sparkling and dazzling programme of sanitation. Christianity says, Why so hot, my little sir? Health is the expression of the heart. When the heart is right there will not be lacking the colour of health upon the cheek. You are painting skin. I am touching life at its font and central spring. Christianity does not build a new house for a man; it creates for him a new atmosphere. Atmosphere is always the largest quantity. It is larger even than light; it abides when the light has gone away. Atmosphere stays with us all night. Atmosphere makes life; we take from it our health, our vitality, our temperature, we take from it our colour. What Christianity wants to create, therefore, is a Pentecostal air, —fire-filled, angel-thronged, pure and health-giving, as that which flows over the hills of heaven.

Christianity, therefore, does not begin with your little reformer, fussy, urgent, tumultuous, self-exploding. Christianity begins with "judgment and the love of God." Hence its slowness. That is the explanation of the tardiness of the kingdom of God, because when it does come it will never go away. Our little reforms have their day, they have their day and cease to be; but when the kingdom of God comes—it has taken uncounted centuries to come—it will abide, and God shall be all in all; the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. The greatness of Christianity is the explanation of its tardiness. It is being out-run at present by many competitors, and so impatient are those competitors that they jeer Christianity, and they jeer the Church, and they jeer the pulpit, and they say that the ministers of the Church are always the last to come along; then arises the loud vulgar laugh of ignorance. Those who take but superficial views of life and duty want us to be getting on. I have been watching two buildings in my own neighbourhood: the one was being put up by a speculative builder, and he put it up almost before I had time to turn round; the other dwelling was being put up for the owner,

and directly by the owner, and every stone seemed to bear the impression of individual appreciation. The house was a long time in being built, and it will be a long time in being blown down: already I have seen the ladder five times against the chimney of the speculative builder. We cannot build the kingdom of heaven according to this spirit. God will not have it so. He is content to be mocked for slowness that he may work his way into everlastingness.

Here the Christian ministry is blamed. I have letters from Cornwall, and from Scotland, and from Ireland, from physicians, and working men, and men of business, and young men, who, if all gathered together, would constitute the largest cave of Adullam that ever existed upon the face of the earth, and they are all telling us ministers and preachers and Christian teachers to get on. They are fools, and blind. A little plan can be pushed on very much indeed. You can have a ladder made by contract, but not a tree. That is the difference. You can pledge that this day week at three o'clock in the afternoon that ladder shall be ready under a penalty of two pounds, but you cannot pledge that about an oak-tree. It will be ready when it likes, so to say; it will be ready when it co-operates with the sun, and the soil, and the air, in other words, with God; but when the oak does come it will make your ladder look both useful and vulgar.

The question is, What is the work we have to do? Is it to "tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs"? or is it to establish "judgment, and the love of God"? The work may be in process of being done when there seems to be nothing but a spirit of indolence over the whole Church. Reason takes a long time, because it means to abide for ever when it works out its holy purpose. The pulpit has absolutely nothing to do with the little questions that may be ranked with "mint and rue and all manner of herbs." If any man stood up in a pulpit and delivered his opinion about strikes, he would prostitute his vocation, he would dishonour the altar. He would be beginning at the wrong end: pious in the wrong place. We have nothing to do in the pulpit with competing politics; we have nothing to do with civic administration in the pulpit: and yet we have to do with them

all, but in another and loftier and grander sense. You cannot have "judgment and the love of God" operating in human understanding and conscience and life, without mint and rue and all manner of herbs having due attention paid to them. This is the glory of the pulpit. This is the glory of the pulpit because it is the glory of Christianity. Yet there are persons all round about us who tell us how we ought to preach; especially is a man delighted when he can come in and say, "That is the very thing I have been saying, sir, the last five-and-twenty years." Man loves to hear himself loudly preached. But what about the other man who has been saying the exact contrary these five-and-twenty years? Of course it is easy to relegate him to old-fogeydom; easy to say that he is out of the running, out of the swim, out of the spirit of the times; that is a rough-and-ready method with your opponents: but is it just, is it reasonable, is it right in the sight of eternity?

My contention is that the pulpit has nothing to do with the details of controverted or contentious questions, and yet the pulpit can exert upon them the profoundest and most beneficent influence. When I go into the church I must hear honesty so expounded and so enforced—sweet, wholesome honesty, frank-faced, open-eyed honesty—that I dare not go out and do the little mean dishonesty which I had intended to do. Has the pulpit been talking metaphysics when it has been so talking and so affecting my life? It is absurd and unjust to maintain any such contention. My preacher did not say a word about little detailed acts of theft, of felony, but he so exalted honesty, snow-white honesty, that I burned with shame when I thought of the mean thing I was going to do to-morrow morning. When I go into the church I must hear justice so expounded and so vindicated as to make it impossible for me to be unjust, whether I am man or master. Is the minister therefore doing nothing? Is Christianity dumb amid all your strikes and elections and contentions? The Sermon on the Mount would settle everything; yet the Sermon on the Mount is a great moral revelation and a sublime moral appeal. The Golden Rule would reconcile capital and labour, all political contention and uproar, all selfishness and greed. Yet we are waiting for some man to write a large book

that will philosophically adjust and determine everything. We have been waiting for him so long that I have long ago given up any expectation of seeing him. I find the Man has come and the book has been written—the name of the Man is Jesus Christ, the name of the Book is the Golden Rule, and all contentions and controversies should be settled by that rule alone. Herein is he Prince of Peace, Reconciler of the nations. When I go to hear my minister I must hear Charity—sweet, tuneful, beauteous, mother-like, sister-like Charity—so expounded and applied that I cannot and will not write my bad criticism to-morrow. I thought of running that man down, but I cannot now. If what I have heard is true about charity,—great, noble, all-hoping, divinest love—if that is true, I should be ashamed of myself if I wrote that bad-blooded criticism upon my fellow-worker; I will burn it. Is the pulpit, thus interpreted and thus applied, doing nothing? It would seem to be doing more if it placarded the church walls with —"Discourse next Sunday morning on the Great Strike." I should be ashamed of any sanctuary that was blistered with such a brand. Yet the pulpit, I may repeat again and again almost to tediousness, does take up every quarrel, contention, difficulty, threatening of war, and would settle them all upon the altar of Christ.

Here, then, let us refresh our memory by saying here is the reason of the slowness of many Christian means. It is not the business of the pulpit to discuss politics, but it is the business of the pulpit to rouse and educate conscience. Many of my correspondents call for practical preaching—that is to say, they mean by "practical preaching" a very sound whipping of the man who sits next to them. They insist that the pulpit is not practical; but when the pulpit inflicts upon them a just laceration, then they say the pulpit is transgressing its province, is becoming personal and intolerable. God be thanked! I would it were intolerable by some wretches! I would that justice and the love of God could be so expounded and enforced that every man who is going to cease work to-morrow morning before the clock strikes twelve should be ashamed of himself, and say to himself, "I am a bad thief," and keep his hand going till the clock strikes right up. I would have justice so expounded that if any employer were

thinking of withdrawing, curtailing, pinching, and unjustly treating the humblest boy in his charge, he should say, Instead of stinting him I will increase his income. I will encourage him by all manner of kindly recognition. If great principles, divine religion and maxim, do not work out these issues, nothing can work them out. They may appear for a time to be doing well; but all your plans, policies, programmes, schemes, arrangements will come to nothing, they will wither away because there is no deepness of earth; and the thing that will abide is the regenerated life, the soul born from above. If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things have passed away, and all things have become new. If we are not born again, we may do very much in speculative building and in new programme drawing, we may make great excitement as if we were going to readjust the relations of individual, social, and imperial life; but it will come to nothing, it will be as an idiot's tale—sound, fury, signifying nothing. Have faith in "judgment and the love of God"; in other words, have faith in truths that are fundamental, vital, that spring from Christ and return to Christ; in other and better words still, have faith in the Cross. That, and that alone, will bring the nations to brotherhood, will unite earth with heaven.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, our lives are precious unto thee, for thou dost create them, and thou hast redeemed them with a price beyond all reckoning. We are redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. And inasmuch as thou hast freely delivered him up for us all, with him also thou wilt surely give us all things. Help us to trust in the Lord, and to wait patiently for all the way that he himself is taking, knowing that at the end thereof we shall see some new and beautiful vision of thy love. We oftentimes hasten thee, because we are weak,—our prayers show our weakness; every hour we urge thee where thou dost need no importunity. We wonder at thy slowness, and at much of thy method of governing man, because we ourselves can see but a little way, and what we do see is beheld very indistinctly. Thy will be done. We put ourselves into thy hands; we are to thee children and sons and redeemed ones, and surely thou wilt magnify thy grace and thy power in our life. We know not what a day may bring forth. We are of yesterday, and know nothing. We cannot tell what is passing around us, and as for the secret of the next hour, behold it is too deep for us. What, then, shall we do? We will rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. We will put our case into the hands of God, and we will say, Judge thou; direct the way of our feet; uphold our lives in righteousness, and by-and-by, when it seemeth good in thy sight, bring forth our judgment as the light, and our righteousness as the noonday. We will trust thee in Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus Christ alone that we know the meaning of true faith. May the faith which he called for be found in us! Lord, increase our faith. May we by faith lay hold of thy words of love, and fully realise them; enter into their meaning and live upon them, as a child lives upon his inheritance. What is it that hinders us from the full realisation of thy presence and thy care? Surely it is our unbelief. Help us, now that we are gathered around the Cross of Jesus Christ, to renounce our unbelief and to begin our life again. May it henceforward be a life of faith on the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. We humbly beseech thee to pardon our sins. God be merciful unto us sinners! The blood of Jesus Christ, thy Son, cleanseth from all sin. May we know its purifying power. May we know the joy of pardoned men, and the blessedness of those whose iniquity is covered. Enable us now to worship thee with simplicity and sincerity and love, and whilst we tarry before thee, may a great light fill our hearts; may a new joy take possession of us; may each hearer listen to the gospel as he never listened to it before, and answer the appeal of thy love by the entire surrender of his heart. Break down the stubborn will dispel the

prejudices of an evil mind; destroy the power of temptation, and the whole system of our spiritual enemy; do thou upset and utterly put him away, and give us again to feel that we are children of God; that we have stewardship imposed upon us; that we ourselves are not our own, and that what is in our hand belongs unto the Giver of every good gift. Lord, hear us and be merciful unto us, and read the secret of our heart, and come to us as a God of truth where we need instruction, as a God of comfort where sorrow is swallowing us up, as a God of light where we are groping and stumbling in darkness; and above all and including all, come unto us as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Show thyself to us as we need to see thee. We hope in God; we pray for the gift of God the Holy Ghost. We would be solemn, quiet, thoughtful. We would be inspired whilst we abide in the sanctuary. We would be filled with the Holy Ghost! Let the Lord hear us; let our cry prevail with our Father, and our hearts shall be filled with blessing! Amen.

Chapter xii. 16-20.

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

THE RICH FOOL.

LET us find out where this man, called a "fool," got wrong. There seem to be some points of common-sense in the man. One is, therefore, curious to know where he breaks away from good thinking into foolish planning, and where he proves himself to be an atheist.

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully" (ver. 16).

There is nothing wrong in that. There is no harm in having good crops, fields beautiful with the produce of nature. You cannot stand beside a man's farm, and say, "This must be a very bad person, because his fields bring forth so plentifully." In Old Testament times abundance of harvest was considered a sign of the divine favour, and men regarded the increase of the ground as a token of God's approbation. It is a practical fallacy to suppose that a man must be wrong because he has plenty. A man may be a very child of God, a saint, and a crowned one in the spiritual kingdom, and yet have an abundance on every

hand. He may also be a very bad man, and yet be poor and destitute and homeless and friendless; and contrariwise, forasmuch as nothing depends upon the circumstances, but everything upon the spirit. The rich man before us derived his property from the ground; and agriculture is of all professions the most honest, the most natural, and the most beautiful. Some of us would like to follow that pursuit above all others. What can be more simple and beautiful than to till the ground, and to get out of the kindly earth sustenance for our daily life? So far, therefore, we find nothing amiss. The man was rich, and his ground brought forth plentifully. Herein, there is no indictment against him. Let us, then, proceed :—

"And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do?" (ver. 17.)

There is nothing wrong there. A man must reflect. A man must put questions to himself regarding the disposing of the property which has come honestly into his hands; he must put a value upon his possessions, and know how to act with prudence. There are times when we must stand still, call our lives up, and ask ourselves some plain, practical, business questions. So far, therefore, the man appears to be a man of sense, —he is reflective, he is thoughtful, he sees what he has, and wishes to dispose of it. Let us, then, proceed one step further :—

"Because I have no room" (ver. 17).

There he is wrong! He had plenty of room, if he had known it. Not barn-room; but soul-room—life-room! He measured his room by measuring his barn. What, hast thou no room for all thy goods when so many thousands of people are starving upon the face of the earth? No room for thy surplus property, when many men have not where to lay their heads? The man begins to get wrong at this point—in thinking about his barns only, and in taking too limited a view of the scope of his life. Perhaps we shall find something wrong a word or two farther on. So we do :—

"All my fruits, and my goods" (ver. 18).

There he is wrong again. My fruits, and my goods, and my soul, and my barns. That is all wrong. He has narrowed down things to a point. He has made himself the centre of reckoning; he has constituted his own individuality into the standard of life.

But surely a man may say "my soul"? No. Only in a secondary sense, at least, may he say that. "For all souls are mine," saith the Lord. The fundamental error in life is that a man should call himself his own. And until that deadly, fatal reasoning is driven out of him, he will never take hold of life by the right end. The discussion is not, "Is what I have in my hand my property or not?" Your hand itself is not your own. Why, then, be wasting your life in some little peddling debate about what you hold in your hand? No man can live wisely, deeply, truly, until he has got rid of the notion that he is his own property. Herein is the great mystery of the Christian faith: Ye are not your own; ye are bought, ye belong to another. Glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God's. I do not, therefore, follow a man into any debate when he says, "My barns, my fruits, my goods." I let him chatter on; but when he says, "My soul," I arrest him! He may fight all day long about his barns and his fruit and his goods, and no useful result would testify to our wordy debate. But if I can convince a man that his soul is not his own, except in a secondary sense: that it is God's; that it is a bought soul; and that it must take its law and its way from the utterances of God,—I shall have brought the man to the right point from which to start all the courses and all the discipline of his life. Is not selfishness at the root of all evil? Is not a man little in proportion as he debates everything in the light of his own personality? This man committed that great error. He spoke of nobody but himself; he seemed to imagine that creation was absorbed in his own little life; he was his own lawgiver, and he undertook to decide his own way. Let us read further, because we shall perhaps find that the man's character more fully develops itself:—

"And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (ver. 19).

What had he laid up? Much goods. Truly! But had he the years laid up? Barn enough—goods enough. But where are the stored years? Can a man lock up even one day, and say, "Thou art mine; I will come for thee"? He seemed to think that all things came within the range of his individual ownership; and yet there was a point when his poor little "my" dropped down dead, and had no longer any hold upon his property. My

fruits, my barns, my goods, my soul; but not my years. No! God must, now and then, just put in a little claim of proprietorship, must he not? He says, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and thou shalt even go to this line only in a secondary sense. But when thou dost take into thy keeping the years, and make a covenant with time and mortgage the future, I must say, No; boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Ye must not say, We will go in to such and such a city, and tarry there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain. But ye ought to say, If the Lord will. There are unseen forces we have to consult; stubborn as we may be and self-resolved, there are great walls set round about us, that we cannot break through —invisible walls, but there they are—and he only is wise who, knowing the limit of his little power, and holding it as secondary, says, "Not my will, but thine, be done." We can lay up the goods, but we cannot lay up the years. We can, in some sense, call the fruits ours, but no man can call to-morrow his. There are limits to proprietorship, there are boundaries to property, and ever and anon God comes down to us in some way, to say, "The earth is mine, and the fulness thereof." No nation can live long in sweltering prosperity; sometimes, therefore, God comes down about harvest time, and scatters a blight upon the wheatfield, and people wonder. Why? "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." May he not do what he will with his own? Sometimes he says to the wind, "Blow," and the poor little structures of human skill are toppled over. Sometimes he says to the flood, "You may go over the line to-night—rush on!" and then men run away from the invading waters. Is it not right that now and then he should put in some kind of claim upon his own property? We hold it only as stewards; at best we have it but secondarily; it is his, and if it please him to shake the roots of the earth—"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." And what shall we, even the mightiest, require? Just a handful of it at last, under which to hide our dead bones.

Let us read again. We may discover that the iniquity deepens:

'I will say to my soul, Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (ver. 19).

The man was all animal. There was not one little bit of blue

sky in all his universe. His universe was a great dinner-table, or a great wine-cellar. He told his soul to eat, drink, and be merry; not knowing what a soul lives upon, or what its proper food and drink are. So he told his soul that it would find heaven in the barn. I thought as much. The moment he said soul and barn in the same sentence, I was confident his intention was to feed his soul with chaff and with wind. Some men are doing this to-day. They are starving their minds and begrudging proper sustenance for their souls. The literature they read is the literature that poisons their best life. The conversation they hold, being destitute of the truly spiritual element, tends to the impairing of their manhood and the destruction of every holy energy of their nature. A man, as in this case, may make promises to his soul that are the worst threatenings. A man says that he is going to treat his soul well, not knowing that his "well" is the deadliest threat that could ever be uttered to the life that was within him. Let us not be altogether animalised. Let us know that we cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. For there is a way of feeding the soul which means destroying it. He who learns this in time may yet save something out of the wreck of his nature: having spoiled the most of a lifetime, he may yet gather up some of the fragments, that he be not wholly lost!

So much for the man's own speech. Now we turn to another side:—

> "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (ver. 20.)

What had he forgotten from his calculations? Only God. He had his slate and his pencil, and bent over and wrote his memorandum, and it looked well; and when he had added up what he had set down, he said, "That is the sum total." What had he omitted from his slate? God! The one thing that most of us are omitting from all our calculations. You cannot build a house without God; because the winds are his, and the rains, the lightnings, and all natural forces, and no man can take a

lease of them, or have any right of property in them. You must believe either in that way, and by a kind of natural theology take note of God; or in the better way of homage and spiritual trust. But there you are—he has you in his grip! It is one of two things. It is either to be held by him, or to say, "Hold me." If I take the wings of the morning, and flee unto the uttermost parts of the earth, he is there, waiting for me. If I say, I will linger in mid-sea, behold, every wave that breaks against my vessel says, "God is here!" If I make my bed in hell, even there a shadow passes over me, and I know it to be God! And as for heaven, it is made by his presence. You see life does not divide itself sharply, thus: One man can live without God, away from his administration and control and sovereignty; and another man can live under God, working out his laws, and living in harmony and peace with all his dispensations. The earth is full of his presence, and whatever I touch has his autograph upon it The rich unthinking man had omitted God from his calculations. God allows us sometimes to go so far along the road, and all things look very pleasant, and we seem to feel as if we had left all care behind us, and had only to open another gate or two and then—liberty without bounds, and enjoyment without end! Yes,—only another gate or two! Go up to the first gate; try your key. No use? Shake the gate, perhaps it only requires a little strength, because some of the hinges are rough. No! Look well at the wards and appointments to see where the difficulty is. Cannot! Try it again. And a great mist falls upon it,—you step away from it but one inch, and you can never find it any more; darkness has settled upon it, and you are groping about like a homeless, blind man! God allows us to proceed in our monologue, sentence after sentence, and we seem to have things all our own way; and then, when we have set up our little plan, he puts a question to us which makes us drunk, but not with wine; he puts one view of life before us, and we turn dizzy as we look. We have come to the last step, and we are just going to take it, and then, as we imagine, all will be well with us. We take it,—and we are never heard of more. Who can dig a pit so deeply as God? Who can scoop out abysses so terrible as those which are made by the hand of the Almighty?

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee" (ver. 20).

"Thou fool." Why use this expression? The man was very wise, on one side of his nature. So many of us are clever in little points. So many people are prudent and sagacious and wise in one aspect of their nature, and are utter and irredeemable fools in others. If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness! Few men are foolish altogether. The man in the parable talked wisely up to a given moment, and from that time he went down into the utterest and worst imbecility. What does God say? "This night." God sometimes gives but short notice to his tenants. Oftentimes the Most High cometh suddenly upon us. May he rightfully do so? Yes. Why? Because "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." All souls are his. All lives are but throbs of his own heart. No man hath right or title of proprietorship in himself, nor can have evermore.

Does not Jesus Christ in this parable disclose the method of the divine government? God comes suddenly to men, so that not a man amongst us can surely say he will be living upon the earth to-morrow morning! Oh, that men were wise; that they understood these things; that they would consider their latter end! "Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Is there a man amongst us who knows of a certainty that he will reach his home again? Can the wisest of us say, with sureness, that he will live five minutes longer? This is the reality of affairs; this is the kind of thing we ought to look at and estimate in making up the scheme of our life. We are walking upon a very thin line. On the right hand there is an abyss, on the left hand there is a precipice. There is barely foothold between the two. "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." As a mere matter of fact, we hold our life without a moment's guarantee that we shall have it to-morrow. What becometh us, then, but diligence and watchfulness and prayerfulness; a spirit that makes the best of the passing hour; a disposition that cries to be taught what is best to be done within the brief space allotted to human life?

"This night." The man had forgotten the nights! He talked about years in whole numbers; about the bright spaces called day, but did not think of those black lines called night. Between to-day and to-morrow there rolls the black night-river, and we may fall into it, and never step on the shore of the morning. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

"Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (ver. 20.)

Can the man not take them with him? Not one of them. But they are fruits of the earth? Yes,—but not required in the other world. What, then, is it impossible for a man, after having been anxious and thoughtful, after having worried himself to death in the amassing of a little property, is it impossible for him to take it out into the next world? Yes,—impossible! "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also." Make your ground bring forth plentifully; be the best farmers in the neighbourhood; be successful in every kind of business or profession; and, if you possibly can, rise to the very top of the line along which you are working. But all the while hold all these things loosely; hold them in a spirit of stewardship. Then you will hold them rightly, and when God says, "Let go!" it will be but a step into heaven. The only things we can carry out of this world are our thoughts, our feelings, our impulses, our desires,—all the elements which make us spiritual men, and invest us with moral character. We take out of this world our moral and spiritual condition,—and as the tree falleth, so must it lie! What, then, do I find wanting in the speech of the foolish man? I find no grateful heart in it all. The man never blessed his banquet in the name of God. Not a word do I hear to this effect: "God hath dealt bountifully with me: praise God from whom all blessings flow. He hath put all these things into my care; he hath entrusted me with all this large estate, that I may administer it in his name. Lord, teach me how to use it, so that not one crumb be wasted, but

that the whole be so ordered and dispensed as to bring honour to thy name, and satisfaction and gladness to thy children that are round about me." He doubles his enjoyment of worldly things who uses them gratefully; he drinks the best wine who drinks out of the goblet of thankfulness; he has most who gives most; and he grows most truly who, for Christ's sake, expends himself for the good of others most fully.

How, then, are we to live wisely in the world? How, then, are we to be wise in the dispensing of the produce of the earth and the results of honest trading? We meet the whole thing only in one way. We come back at a bound to the old, old gospel. Only he who lives in Christ Jesus, and has Christ Jesus living in his heart, can use wisely and well the things of the present world. A great deal has to be learned by sheer force of thought, by mental diligence, by comparing notes one with another, by meeting in associations for the purpose of discussion; but under all, and over all, and including all, there must be a profoundly religious spirit that sees God in everything, that feels his presence, and that acknowledges his sovereignty and his right. Because, after we have made our ground do its best, and we have pulled down our barns and built on a larger scale; after we have stored up our goods, he may say to us suddenly, "To-night I shall want you!" And we cannot say him, No. You may say No to your best friend; you can refuse the invitation of your most importunate associate; but when God says, "I shall want you to-night," you cannot write a note of excuse! When God says, "Thy soul shall be required of thee to-night," you cannot say, "Lord, let it stand over for a week." See, then, our weakness, as well as our strength; and know this, O man, as a matter of dead certainty, whatever our religious faith may be, though we are the vilest, vulgarest, and most stubborn atheists, that we cannot escape the final day—the great deed—the deed of death!

How, then, am I to become prepared for the last great scene? for I think it worth preparing for. As a wise man, I think I shall be doing right in turning this over in my mind, and making some reflections upon it; and thus have I resolved, by the strength

and grace of God, to do: I will put my confidence in God—in God as revealed in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ; in God as known to me through the Cross, as the one Saviour; God the Son, who loved me and gave himself for me. I will walk in the way of God's commandments, and I will diligently study his precepts; I will make his Book the man of my counsel and the light of my way. All that I can do I shall do according to the strength he gives me, and I will praise him for the power with which he may invest my life. This I will do; and I think it is the right thing. I ask you who are hovering between two opinions to decide so; and I ask those of you who are already on the right side to pray without ceasing; and let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." The strongest of us is not stronger than his weakest point; and the very subtlest of temptation may even elude us, if our eyes be not anointed with the eye-salve that God himself alone can give.

Seeing, then, that there is to be a day of departure from this world, when I must leave my fields and my barns and my goods and my fruits and my present relationships,—what shall I do? This. Live for eternity. Look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we bless thee that thou hast made us understand thy will in some degree. We glorify thee that we have heard of thy will through Jesus Christ thy Son, who was able to explain it and make it clear to our dull understanding. Now thou hast laid upon us a great responsibility: to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Verily thou hast done much for us: what can we do in return? Thou dost daily load us with benefits; we would that thy goodness might lead us to repentance, and not unto presumption and boastfulness; may the goodness of the Lord humble our souls, and open our eyes, and constrain us to walk in the paths of obedience; may thy mercies not be wasted upon us as rain is wasted upon the barren sand. Having received much at the hand of the Lord, may we be proportionately diligent, growing in grace, adding to virtues all the graces which thou hast named, bringing forth all the fruits of the Spirit, and justifying our communion with God by our kindness and love and service towards man. Thou knowest our life, its frailty, yet its immortality; thou knowest how abject is man, yet how almost divine. Thou dost lead us by strange ways, thou dost interpret thyself unto us by the events of life: take thine own course with us, O loving Father, gentle Saviour, and lead us at last to the open heavens, where the morning is, where the summer lingers, where the light continues; where there is nor death, nor pain, nor parting; the homeland, the place of gathering, made sacred and secure by the eternal presence of him who died that we might live. Amen.

Chapter xii. 42.

"And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?"

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY.

OUR Lord commends the faithful and wise steward who gives a portion of meat in due season to the household placed in his charge. A portion of meat to each; not necessarily the same meat, not necessarily the same quantity of food; but the faithful and wise steward looks at the whole situation, sees what is best to be done, and does it conscientiously and to the best of his ability. So far the faithful and wise steward may be taken as a type of the faithful and wise pastor, or minister of a congregation, or teacher

of a household or school, whose business it is to study variety of character, and to adapt his communications of doctrine, or truth, or suggestion of any kind to the capacity and the training and the circumstances of those with whom he has to deal. The man who continues steadfastly upon one line may appear to be doing more good than the man who studies a large variety of human character, and zealously tries to adapt himself not to one class of hearer or people, but to all classes. His work is often too much diffused to be estimated and measured as would be the work of a man who toils only at one kind of labour. Our Lord, however, commends in various instances that steward who studies his peculiar circumstances; who recognises and develops his individual responsibility, and who thus endeavours to serve his day and generation. Consider the variety of a human assembly: no two men are precisely alike; what one man believes another heartily discredits and zealously repudiates; what is sacred to one conscience is looked upon by another as a fanaticism or a superstition, a piece of pedantry hardly to be excused—a narrow, dwarfing, humiliating morality that ought to have been forgotten years ago. Yet the teacher must consider all these varieties, and see that by no lack of his shall any man leave his table over which he has been set by the lord of the house without having a portion of meat in due season. There should be mutual sympathy in the congregation; all exasperating and narrow individuality or personalism should be lost in a sacred and ennobling fusion of feeling, thought, desire, purpose, so that individualism shall be magnified into largeness and representativeness of humanity and aspiration.

Consider, for example, that in all assemblies you will find the slow-thinking, slow-minded hearer, untaught, unskilled, wanting much nursing and care and patience; he cannot be hastened; he has always moved at a certain pace, and his pace cannot be quickened. If you attempt to stimulate him you plunge him into confusion; if you urge him to the next sentence he completely forgets the one that has just been spoken. Yet side by side with him is a man who sees the end of a discourse in the very first word—that too-quick, too-sharp man, who anticipates every speaker, and who knows the course of every argument before it has even been dimly outlined. What is to be done in such cases?

Nothing can meet such exigencies but mutual sympathy; the quicker, keener, more penetrating the mind, the greater should be the patience, the more complete and noble the indulgence. Some credit, too, should be given to the speaker for knowing what he is about; when he is slow or diffuse, when he repeats himself in some degree, what if in his pastoral heart he be considering the untaught and slow-minded that needs his instruction a line at a time, sometimes a syllable, and a halt before the next syllable is uttered? If a man were really clever, quite a genius at hearing, able to swallow up a thousand preachers before they had opened their mouths, he ought to be as great in patience as he is brilliant in self-conceit. We cannot all travel at the same rate. Be patient with the slow one. You would not leave any behind; you will have a poor account to give at the end if you have only brought the strong, and the agile, and the audacious along with you, and have left all the little children, all the slow-footed, all the infirm—how shall you tell the lord of the house that you have only brought those who were able to gallop your pace? It will be a poor account to render; it will bring to the Lord's sweet face a flash of righteous anger.

Here is the strong, prosperous man, who wants everything done quickly; he reduces life to one philosophic motto—namely, Get it over. He does not want any particulars, distinctions, analyses, fine traceries in colour, and new combinations of geometric outlines; he wants to take his gospel in large boluses and let them work their mystery within him as they like. Near to him is one who is weary and ill at ease; all life is entangled in knots and perplexities, and no sooner is one hand filled than the other is emptied, and no sooner is one step taken in advance than half a step is fallen backwards. The light is always beclouded, grey; June cannot bring full day to such eyes, summer must linger long to prove that it has ever come at all. What is to be done? The fat, prosperous, dominating man takes no heed of those who are weary and ill at ease, and by so much he does not deserve his prosperity. The great law of Nature will get hold of that man some day; he can only be taught through his flesh, you can only get any hint of theology into him through his purse: impoverish him, and he may begin to pray; strip him,

and in his nakedness he may cry out for the gods. Honour him who is of faint heart and sad wounded spirit; be angry with the brother who is so strong and bold and urgent: let each have his portion of meat in due season. The mature Christian must have his doctrine, and the hardened sinner must be brought under the hammer of God's love; before some must flame the law, a living, avenging Sinai, a mountain of fire—paled by a crown of lightning. To another must be spoken poems, idyls, dreams, hints of things large and bright and ever-abiding. Yet one mind has to do all this. One mind can do it under the blessing of God if the congregation itself be intelligent, responsive, sympathetic.

No one hearer should expect the whole discourse to himself. He must be a wonderful man who needs a whole discourse, what can he do with it? No man wants the whole bill of fare. There are men who would swallow the menu, and think they had dined: why do they not swallow it? There is all the difference in the world between crumpling up the bill of fare and drinking it, and really enjoying some two or three of the viands indicated on the hospitable paper. Some men will find their refreshment in a sentence; that is enough for them. Take your sentence, eat it, live upon it, and pray that others may be able to seize some little word, some flashing simile, some coloured parable, some hint of larger things and larger actions. Thus let there be established in a congregation the principle of mutual sympathy, so that the strong shall say, The pastor is now after the weak: God bless him; he has a great tender woman's heart, and he will not stir one inch until he picks up the very frailest of those who want to follow him in his holy wandering. Sometimes the weak will have to say, The pastor is now struggling with the strong: he is a valiant soul, he has never been thrown yet, and in this contest by the power of Christ he will be conqueror again. God bless him! see how he tugs with the broad Hercules. Thus a discourse shall be a thousand sermons; every sentence a gospel; every appeal a new chance; every exposition a vision of the brightness and grandeur of life. Do not take your one sentence and run away. That would be selfishness. If any one would study selfishness let him be often at church. There are hearers that take just what they want, and then leave

the preacher and his hearers to do what they can for themselves. Where is unity? Where is masonry? Where is the household spirit? Where the family genius? Oh! where that divine shepherdliness that carries the lambs in its bosom? Thus a congregation should be the co-pastor of the preacher. Some will pray whilst he wrestles with the hardened; some will thank God as he drops the honey of sacred promise upon those who are hungering for heavenly solace, and throughout the whole assembly there shall breathe a spirit of unity, and the discourse in its wholeness shall belong to everybody, because parts of it in their adaption belong to somebody. You may have had your portion in the prayer; when the portion of Scripture is read you may say, That is enough; I can go in the strength of that sweet word full forty days and more. So be it; now wait for the others. You are not other than part of humanity; subdue your selfishness; a little trial of patience may sometimes chasten you, and refine and enlarge your best education.

To whom shall we go for examples of all this doctrine but to Christ himself? He was the universal Preacher; he had no style of preaching—he had all styles. Have you studied Christ as a minister, pastor, preacher, teacher? How infinite the variety! How humiliating to the miracles when they are set beside Christ's teachings! In his doctrine he was greater than in his miracles. He spoke the beatitudes, whole philosophies in little sentences, life condensed to a point, a point that flashed, and that gleams in ever-brightening beauty as the ages come and go. Will he always speak beatitudes? Shall we always hear this Man in this key? Is he one line of music? Has he founded a school of style? No. When we hear him again he will pronounce no beatitudes, but there shall roll from his lips a torrent of overwhelming Woes! And yet if our ear be quick enough to hear inner music, minor tones, undertones, we shall hear in the malediction a voice of pity, a tone that says, I would it were otherwise; and if our eyes be quick to see all life's mystery as pictured in the face, we shall see tears coming that would have prevented the Woes if they could. Does this Teacher exhaust himself in beatitude and malediction? No; the next time we hear him he will be speaking pictures; he will be uttering those

wondrous parables that hold all the stories and romances that ever really took place in human consciousness and experience. Nothing ever happened in all true fiction that cannot be found in the parables of Christ. "True fiction"—is not that a contradiction in terms? No. No fiction is worth reading that is not true —true to human nature, true to reason, true to the possibilities of life; however grand, eerie, wild it may be, the world will shake it off as a nuisance if it cannot lay hold by a thousand tentacles upon human recollection, human consciousness, human experience, the whole tragedy of human endurance and aspiration.

But besides all this Christ was a great painter of character. Perhaps we have not dwelt sufficiently upon this phase of the divine ministry. Jesus was always sketching some individual, always contributing some new picture to the gallery of human art. He did not always enjoy the advantage of being fully reported; we have to put things together in making up the ministry of Christ; we have to enter into his spirit and method of looking at things, and then, out of the fragments that are related in the evangelists, we can shape temple and poem and altar and picture as Christ meant them to be represented to the eye of the religious imagination. See how he struck off a character in a sentence. Who can forget the man in long robes? The description may be so read as really to have little suggestion in it; or it may be so read as to fill the eyes with pictures of hypocrisy and skill and partially successful deceit. Who could but remember the men standing in the market-places and praying to the empty clouds, as if God could stop to listen to voices without hearts? There they stand, mockers, actors, liars; and there they will stand until the end of the world's tragedy. Then see how quickly he turns his eyes upon men who are seeking out the chief seats. Is it a synagogue? He watches the man who is urging his way to the uppermost place. Is it a feast? He says, Look at this fool who is urging himself to the top, only to be ordered down to the bottom again; watch him, see how the little comedy will end. Then he turns and paints, with wondrous ineffable skill, a heart, young, passionate, riotous, that lost its filial instinct and wandered away into far places, the habitations of dragons

and the abodes of desolation and hunger. One man he described as simply well clothed, and faring sumptuously every day, and dropping into hell.

So we have justification for the various treatment of men in the example and in the authority of our blessed Lord and Master Jesus Christ. There should be great variety in Christian teaching. Society should provide texts for the preacher. The Bible is a book of seeds, germs, alphabetic hints; the newspaper should be as a bible to the reverent and eager reader; he should study the journal of the morning to know what God is doing amongst mankind. The journal will be what you make it: regard it as so much gossip, news, to be scanned and bandied about in frivolous conversation, and it will amount to nothing; regard it as indicating a providential action, a ministry of rulership, a ministry that seemingly delights in contradiction, controversy, conflict, paradox, and yet over all exercises a sovereignty which shapes things out to their best uses; then every incident will be as a pillar of cloud by day or a pillar of fire by night, or a whispered word indicating the continued presidency and the continued beneficence of God. He preaches Christ who denounces hypocrisy. The hypocrite will be the first to regard such preaching as wanting in evangelical sentiment. The hypocrite is very fond of a really juicy, savoury doctrine. It does him no harm; he can sleep through the most of the exposition; there will be no shot-mark upon his mask. Let a preacher arise amongst us who has the gift of denunciation, the genius of objurgatory speech, a man entrusted with thunderbolts and flashes of lightning, and the hypocrite will publish his name as one who is wanting in evangelical unction. The man must bear the penalty; it is his prize, it is his commendation. He preaches Christ who protects women and children. The cruel man will object to such preaching on the ground that it is a great departure from the lines that were taken by the unread Puritan divines. Abuse some other sin, and he will applaud you; lay your hand upon his cruelty, and he will be impracticable in his anger and madness. A man who shall stand up in the Christian pulpit and plead for women and children who are helpless, friendless, or cruelly used, is preaching the gospel, is uplifting the Cross of

Christ. He, too, preaches the gospel who tells the worst that they may come back again. It would be unworthy preaching that omitted to take notice of those who have wandered far from light and truth and beauty, virtue, honour, and nobleness. We do not want stay-at-home shepherds who, being sure of the ninety-and-nine, care nothing for the one that is lost. They are not shepherds, they are hirelings; the true shepherd cannot sleep because one of the flock is missing; when he appears to lie down his mind is full of solicitude about the absent; what if he but watch for the first hint of dawn, that he may be away to seek that which is lost, only to return when he has found it? Blessed be that teacher, in church, in school, at home, who cannot be happy so long as there is one unhappy person over whom he can exercise some gracious influence. He preaches Christ who denounces censoriousness; he preaches the Sermon on the Mount over again. That is sadly wanting in evangelical sentiment; it will disappoint the man who lives either in cant or in sentiment.

What does your evangelicalism amount to if in five minutes you can blight fifty reputations? If you profess to be evangelical, and can so do, I will not be one of your number. Let me rather invite the charge of heterodoxy than sit down and pluck the flesh from the bones of better men than myself. He preaches Christ who proclaims pardon by the Cross. There is no other pardon. "This is the way; walk ye in it." We are not called upon to invent some theory of pardon; the question is not put to us how to get back our yesterdays, and to purge and cleanse them from the infinite staining they have undergone at our profane hands. Can you get back your yesterdays? Can you go back five-and-twenty years and heal the heart you then wounded? Have you the stealthy foot that can go noiselessly back, and put in again the treasure that you stole? Can you drive a nail into polished wood, and take it out without leaving a wound? Can you shatter crystal and then put it together again so that no flaw can be detected? The question is not put to us, How shall a man be pardoned? We have not to answer an inquiry, but to accept a welcome. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to

our God, for he will abundantly pardon." There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus Christ. Yet this wonderful Son of God represents every aspect of humanity, looks in all directions. His was the fourfold ministry that had the face of a lion, the face of a cherub, the face of an eagle—but oh! had it no other face? Yea, it had the face of a man. This is the ministry the age needs. If this ministry be not exercised in its fourfoldness; if it be wanting in eagle, and lion, and cherub, and humanity, or in any one of these, it is not the ministry of Christ's ideal. It is not a reproduction of the ministry of the Son of God who was also Son of man. Each man may find a portion of meat in every service if he will seek for it; only he is disappointed who will not search. It is impossible that God's house can be opened, and God's praise sung, and God's Word read without a portion of meat being furnished to every man as he wants it; and there is no sermon, how poor soever in intellectual conception, in vocal utterance, that has not in it somewhere, if the preacher be faithful to Christ, a touch, a hint, a gleam, that can be used in life's great warfare. In this respect, Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. Say,—Lord, which sentence was meant for me? and he will show you. Eat it, and live evermore.

Chapter xiii.

NOTES OF CHRIST'S SERMONS.

LUKE undertook to be very minute and exhaustive in his statement of Gospel facts. He was going to do better than many other writers had done. He said so with cool frankness: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also"—that is a curious expression. We expected him to say: Forasmuch as many have done this work there is no need for me to do it. But he makes the very fact that there were other writers a reason why there should be one more. That was good reasoning; it should prevail in all the lines and departments of Christian life and action. The contrary policy often supersedes it, and brings ministers and churches into great discomfort and enfeeblement. Men will say, You have so many helpers, you have no need of me. They are always more or less dishonest men,—not intentionally so; intentional dishonesty is perfectly vulgar and wholly detestable, and nobody lays claim to it; but when men say, "There are so many preachers I need not be one; so many deacons I need not be another; so many helpers there is no need of me," they are not conducting a Christian argument, they are, with all their graciousness, unconsciously jealous and spiteful,—but not sufficiently so to prevent them conducting family prayer in the evening as if they were as good as their neighbours. Luke reasoned in the right way; he said, Many men are taking up this subject, I will do what I can in it; I think I can beat some of them: "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order." Will the book be as good as the preface? I fancy not—when the subject is Jesus

Christ. The first sentence is often the best. Why? Because the subject grows. No man can ever prepare his imagination for the glory of that theme. The young preacher feels this; he buckles to with a brave heart, and says he will work honestly all day, and pray most of the night, and produce such discourses as will satisfy his best ambition. He empties his inkhorn, does all he can, and then puts his young hand upon his mouth and says, Unprofitable! I have failed! I had an ambition high as heaven, bright as the unclouded noon; but I have failed! He does not do justice to himself. The Lord does not pronounce that judgment upon him; he says, Thou hast not failed: industry never fails; conscience always succeeds; thou hast won a right bright crown. Cheer thee! It is not the man who has failed, it is the God who has exceeded all ever thought of in prayer, ever dreamed of in poetry.

Still we expected more from Luke than from the others, and we get more. He does not see some things as Mark saw them. It is fashionable—shall we say, with due mental reservation, pedantic?—to point out that Luke was the observing writer. Mark observed a great many things that Luke never saw, or at least never recorded. Matthew also had his own way of looking at things: and as for John, what was he looking at? Apparently at nothing, his inner eyes were fastened on the soul of Christ. If Luke had sharp eyes, what ears John had! he heard whisperings of the heart, throbbings and beatings and sighings. And what a gift of expression! he turned all that he heard into noble sweet music for the soul's comforting in all the cloudy days of the Church. But Luke says he will set down things "in order"; the others have been good historians, but a little wanting in the power or grouping and classifying; good historians, but poor editors. Luke will break things up into chapters, and verses, and paragraphs, and sections, and he will attend to chronological sequence. We need mechanical men in the Church, people that know when to begin a new paragraph, and to codify laws, and to do a good many useful little things. But when Luke comes to his thirteenth chapter he is obliged to condense. He cannot overtake Christ except by condensation,—a note, a line, a catchword, a significant phrase, and he thinks

he can find all the rest when he goes home to write it out. He cannot. Even Luke says he must put things together in a somewhat hurried and condensed fashion. Blessed be God! It would seem as if God himself must condense, because he cannot overtake himself; so he must put here a syllable, and there a sign, and otherwhere some hint of meaning, in burning bush, in sacred wine, in bread blessed—so blessed that it becomes flesh; he will condense, he will bring things to a sharp issue; he will put in a memorable word, and that word shall stand for a whole library.

This is the way with his book. As we have often said, all other good books are in the Bible. They are variations of it; they are never improvements upon it; they do nothing outside its lines, but they wisely turn to highest advantage what is to be found within its limits. The Bible is the condensed wisdom of God. There are commentators who find sequence in this chapter; there are men bold enough to say that the parable concerning the fig tree follows admirably after the short discourse about what occurred to the Galilæans and those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell. Without seeing the sequence literally we may feel it spiritually. Let us, then, regard this chapter as a series of notes of Christ's sermons. They were sermons that bore reporting. Sometimes the most humiliating thing you can do to a preacher is to try to quote something he has said. He never recognises it; he is perfectly sure he never said it, he has a latent conviction that you made it up: but as you get good from it he is content that you should assign it to his authorship, if you please. But Jesus Christ had a sermon in every sentence, so that if you could not quote in detail you could quote the whole in condensation and suggestion. His were little sentences, but the little sentences were focalised infinities of thought. Luke, therefore, gathers a good deal even in this condensed chapter, and gives us a many-sided view of Jesus Christ. What would we give for a handful of notes used by the Saviour? He never wrote a word. He never preached what is called—with blasphemy—a "finished sermon." We now have "finished" preachers. There is a sense in which that is true. This man so talked that little children opened their eyes in amazement, and women wondered at

the gracious words which proceeded out of his lips, and old age said, "Never man spake like this man." He himself was the discourse; he was in very deed the Gospel—"I am the truth"; he therefore never did anything but preach, because he preached as he breathed; it was a continual forthgiving of deity to humanity. He remarked upon the anecdotes and stories of the times most tersely and instructively. In nearly all ages men have loved startling anecdotes. There were men who told him of the Galilæans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, and they thought they were giving him some information. He said, Pay next to no attention to the anecdotes of the day; do not ground upon the incidents of the time generalisations which cannot be sustained. You suppose that these Galilæans were the supreme sinners because they suffered such things: you are wrong. God is not fantastic in his action. You say that if they had not done so much that was wrong they never could have suffered as they did at the hands of Pilate: nothing of the kind: by so talking you despoil history of its genius and providence of its purpose. I tell you, except ye repent ye shall all perish: attend to yourselves: do not live upon the anecdotes which relate to other people, but enter into self-judgment. The "likewise" does not refer to a literal vengeance or method of punishment, but it refers to the inevitable, unchangeable gracious law, that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. Jesus Christ was not so much interested in the anecdotes as the people were. They had heard of eighteen people being killed by a tower that had fallen down, and Jesus said, "Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things?"

Here we have a doctrine capable of broad application. How foolishly we judge the Almighty! We say that certain men sought their own pleasure on the Lord's Day, and they were drowned. Nothing of the sort. Do not degrade the universe. We say that certain persons having done certain things were struck down dead, and this was a sign of the divine wrath. Such is not the God, the Father, in whom we believe. Are the people therefore wrong in their inferences? They are wrong because they are too narrow. They might avail themselves of

the same great truth, and do it on the right lines, and thus save themselves from contempt and their doctrine from repudiation. From eternity, it is necessary that whoso does wrong should go to perdition. He cannot go anywhere else. That is the law. It was not made by the New Testament; it is not a dogma invented by Christian thinkers: it is the necessity of the universe. Creation casts out of her motherly heart those that will plague and destroy the purpose and intent of God. The son of perdition can only go to hell. Then we are so very apt to be liberal in awarding divine judgments, under some peculiar and inexplicable semi-consciousness that by so doing we are almost equal to the divine Being himself. There is a great comfort to some hearts in judging other people; in this, as in other respects, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Jesus Christ will have no false interpretations of events; he will have no false morals drawn from accidents and anecdotes. We are bound every man to consider his own life, his own conscience, his own duty; let him learn from history to apply history to himself. How prone we are to look upon history as a riddle which we have to guess if we can! Now why did that tower fall upon those eighteen people? Then we have a series of conjectures, and these we call exposition. One minister asks with solemnity too awful to be sincere, "Why is not the name of Job's wife given?" Then he answers himself with a wit too profound to be genuine, "Why should it have been given?" And this we call exposition! Jesus Christ sweeps away all this rubbish; he will have none of it. He says, You are despoiling the meaning of God's providence: you do not comprehend what God is doing: he means all death to teach life; all punishment to teach caution; all judgment to indicate the solemnity, the grandeur, the all but divinity of his universe. Luke takes down enough of this to make it perfectly clear that it was useless to go to Jesus Christ to tell him the last anecdote. He was an awful man to talk to if you wished to fritter away his time or to turn trifles into events of importance.

Why can we not get the Church to be serious, real, fundamental,—to get at the philosophy of things? Ministers have no encouragement to search into these matters, because there is

hardly a congregation in the world that would endure a prolonged and exhaustive study of the Scriptures. Now Jesus Christ, according to some commentators, speaks a parable upon this very subject. The anecdote of the newsmongers suggested a parable to the divine genius. Some people mistake an anecdote for a parable, and a parable for an anecdote. A parable has infinite colour, throb, suggestion, wisdom. Jesus now began to tell what happened. Did it happen literally? Perhaps not. But literal happening is nothing. What we want is the truth, the necessity of life. Truth is larger than fact. Fiction is the largest truth, when rightly managed, when properly interpreted. So Jesus Christ relates a parable:—"A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard." He lays down the doctrine in this parable that he will have nothing to do with uselessness. He makes nothing of ornament; he will not listen to the plea that the fig tree looks well, is an ornament in the place which it occupies, and although there is no fruit, there is an abundance of leafage, and an artist would be very pleased to take a sketch of the tree. The meaning of the whole universe is utility. Utility is a word which has been abused by being narrowed, depleted of its force and meaning. Utility is a wide word. He is useful who grasps a hand in silence; but it is a masonic grip and a masonic sign. He is useful who gives a little child a red and blue and yellow picture —oh, so crude in colour that the trained eye could not look upon it: but the child's eyes round into bigness and delight when they see such vividness. He is useful who gives a shoot of ivy to some poor man to plant in his inch of garden that it may climb round his windows and talk spring and summer to him. He is useful who suggests ideas, excites noblest thought; he most useful who having the gift of prayer lifts men right up to heaven's gate. It is in this sense that Jesus Christ will have nothing but that which is useful, fruitful, real:—"Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit."

But is there not something higher than usefulness in this wondrous parable? Yes. When did Jesus Christ speak without telling all he knew, in suggestion? Every sentence of his contains every other sentence. We have to search for it, to grow its meaning, and for that we want summers warmer

than any that have shone upon earth and time. The first verse of the Bible is the whole Bible. There is nothing more in the Bible than there is in the first chapter of Genesis, and there is nothing more in the first chapter of Genesis than is in the first verse. How it grows! How it reveals itself! How it looks at us, and withdraws; broadens upon us and contracts! How it tantalises, and yet gratifies! How it fills the imagination, how it thrills the heart! So in this very parable we have the great doctrine of intercession. We cannot explain it; but it having been revealed to us as a doctrine we acknowledge it. We have been told that there is one who prays our prayers over again, and makes them by his spirit and addition his own prayers—"He ever liveth to make intercession for us,"—to translate our meaning, to keep back our ignorance and selfishness, and as it were to offer the wine of our realest love and need to God. This is our comfort in prayer. When the prayer has fled away from us like a liberated bird the Lord Jesus undertakes the next office, a sacred, self-imposed duty; and when we hear of our prayers again we hear of them through the same medium, in answers of quietness, rich peace, contentment, ineffable restfulness. This is how the Lord's intercession is granted to us in gracious answers. We cannot tell how, but we know it. We make mistakes in our ignorance. We are mocked because we pray for a fine day that the children may enjoy their summer excursion. There be long-headed philosophers, too courteous to laugh outright, but too human not to smile, who tell us that we want to re-arrange the solar system. These unbaptised brethren are always anxious about the solar system. It is a wonderful thing to them, because they have never seen anything else. If they had once seen God, they never would have mentioned the solar system any more. But when man's great idea of space, and weight, magnitude, force, and velocity, is all concentrated in the solar system, it is exceedingly desirable that Sunday school teachers should not disturb the comfort and the peacefulness of that sublime mechanism. They may be right; but whether they are or not, their view has nothing to do with the energy and the success of prayer. I can pray for a fine day for the excursion, for fine weather that the harvest may be got in; I can pray God to send the haymakers a whole heavenful of sunshine because we

want food in for the beasts that perish; and having said my prayer I shall have an answer. I have prayed for that dear little wasting child, now almost skin and bone, and he will live—even the doctors cannot kill him. He will live. But the word "live" may have to be enlarged; I may have to pass from one lexicon to another to get broader, deeper, truer definition; and when the little child, in the language of earth, dies, I shall see him in every glittering star and every blooming flower, and hear his little chatter in every babbling brook, and he will seem to fill all nature with his little blessed presence.

We must not narrow terms and rob them of their meaning because every word we have does not end in itself, if it be a vital and important and necessary word. Bread does not end at the baker's shop. It is not in the power of any baker to limit the meaning of the word bread. Water is not limited by channels and torrents and pouring clouds: water there is for the soul's drinking—cool, refreshing, pure water. "Live" does not mean some action of the body, some attitude of the anatomy: *live* means something, we cannot yet tell altogether what, in reference to love, thought, development, service, pureness, worship. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord: for they do but enlarge their sphere of service and get nearer to their Maker. The intercession of the text was answered. The intercession of Christ is answered. The answers which are received to our prayers are greater than the prayers themselves; otherwise man would be equal to God; man would say, I prayed for so much and got it. But the Lord gives exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

What do you suppose the people did after all this? A parable like this ought to have saved a man from all criticism, and given him the very highest place in his time. Any man who spoke that parable ought to have had, according to material measure, the very finest house in the land, the noblest position in the whole country. The creator of a parable like that might have created all the stars, and the doing of it would not have been equal to the creation of the parable. What became of him?

"And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years,

and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day" (vers. 10–14).

The Jews had their own way of doing things. It it was a case of life and death the doctor might prescribe on the Sabbath day, but the doctor was not to pay the slightest attention to chronic cases of any kind; they were there on Saturday and they would be there on Monday, and they would be there the next week, and they would be there the next month, and therefore no particular heed was to be paid to them. Here again we find the narrowing spirit. All ailment is the same to Jesus Christ. Transient as men call transient, or chronic as men call chronic, the great fact is that the man wanted healing, and he was there to heal; if he had done anything else he would have thwarted his own election, and stultified his own sovereignty. This was the necessity of his very make, build, constitution,—he came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Having spoken as he only could speak, "all his adversaries were ashamed." He made them hold down their heads that the redness of their blush might not be seen. Whoever encountered him and stood upright after an interview, when the purpose was a purpose of hostility? We have seen how many men came up to him in fine attitude, in studied posture, thinking they had a case that would constrain his attention and secure his approbation. How often we have seen them coming up young men, going away about a hundred years old, so blanched and withered and humiliated, and so ashamed that they dare not speak to one another, or if they did speak they wanted to say, "It was you that would go—I did not want to go, but you made me—I will never go again." "And all the people"—Bless God for the people. What would the kings do without the people? They would die of loneliness. "And all the people"—Yes, it is true oftentimes that the voice of the people is the voice of God. There may be mysterious variations of this, and yet there is a central truth in it. "And all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him." Yes, let judgment be

upon the "things," and we have no fear. We must not be word-mongers, logic-choppers; we must take our stand upon the facts, the conversions, the changes of heart and disposition and character and tone and temper, and Christ asks no other standard of judgment. See what Christianity has done for the world, and by the glorious things it has done let the whole Christian argument stand or fall. We are not all called upon to argue. Many are called upon to suffer, and suffering may be borne with such gracious heroism as to constitute itself into an argument. The great talker proceeded. He gave philosophic symbols of the invisible and infinite kingdom; he said, The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed: like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened; and thus he started imagination on a wondrous course of inquiry, and to this day the poets are finding new symbols. When a man arises who can construct a new parable, true to the purpose of the kingdom of heaven, the people acknowledge him to be a true servant of Christ.

But did the matter end there? No. There was an application to this sermon as there ought to be to every sermon. He said unto them, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." What is the meaning of this "strive"? Literally, wrestle; throw your arms around the adversary, and throw him; struggle; say you will begin. He is a giant with whom you have to grapple, but it is God who tells you to enter into the encounter. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." They shall only seek: but that is not the whole meaning. We must dislodge the narrow-minded theologian from this passage. Have not some good men said, Many will seek to enter in and shall not be able because of the decree of God? Who says so tell lies. When will they seek to enter in and not be able? The Lord gives the time:—"When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are" (ver. 25). The time is when the Lord himself has risen, has closed the dispensation, has terminated the economy of grace, has gone to some other

department, so to say, of his universal empire. But, blessed be his name, he has not risen yet; he has not shut to the door yet. Now men may come. In this holy moment those who are outside may strive to enter in; may wrestle, struggle, determine in God's strength to enter in. If you fail to do this you fail altogether, no matter what admiration you may have of Christianity as a theological system; no matter what knowledge you may have of Christianity as a theological argument; no matter how liberal you may be in the support of Christian institutions. If you do not strive to enter in, determine to enter in, if you do not struggle and agonise; if you do not make it the supreme object of your life to get in, all else is failure. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" Sweet word! How sweet to those whose throats are burning with thirst! "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." What! "abundantly"? Yes. What does that mean? Wave upon wave, billow upon billow of love; he will multiply pardons; give them a thousand thick; so give them that conscience and memory and imagination shall have no more record of sin.

Chapter xiii. 31–34.

"The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

PICTURES OF JESUS CHRIST.

HERE, then, is a picture of a threatened man. Jesus Christ was continually being threatened. There seemed every day to be but a hair's-breadth between him and death. He was despised and rejected of men; there was no beauty in him that man should desire his presence. Yet there was something about him which excited the passion, the most terrible vengeance of mankind. He held his life in his hand, in a special and peculiar way. Who was there that did not lift up a hand against him? Who was there not too mean to pucker up his face into a sneer when he saw the Son of God? And who was there not too feeble to suppose that even he could do some damage to the name of the Messiah? What was there, then, to induce Jesus Christ to live upon the earth? The foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head. Why, then, should he not have made short work of it; have turned right round and said, "I leave the dust of my feet behind me as a testimony against you; I have made you an offer of truth and of life and of love, and you have rejected that offer. I leave you now to all the consequences of your obstinacy"? Yet he came to be upon the earth in this very position in which we find him. He knew the kind of hospitality that awaited him; he knew how homeless he would be; how hard would be the

pillow on which his weary head was to rest; how unkind the looks that would be waiting for him here and there, on the right hand and on the left. Yet, for our sakes, he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. There was nothing strange in the revelation of this lot which met the Saviour—that is to say, there was nothing strange to his mind; he was not startled by the mode of reception that was accorded to him. From the height of heaven he foresaw it; before coming to the earth at all he knew all the courses through which he must of necessity pass. Still, in the face of it all, he came to seek and to save that which was lost. Behold, then, in this text, a picture of a threatened man. There is a sword against thy life; there is a king against thee! Thirty years before Herod the Great had sought the young Child to destroy him; and now, after the lapse of a generation, Herod the Tetrarch sends messages by the Pharisees, that his hand was against him. What a threatened life! What a position of discomfort, of misinterpretation, of utter friendlessness, of sore distress! I want you to look at Jesus Christ in this aspect, and to keep your eyes steadily upon him whilst such messages are being delivered; because it is under such circumstances that we may get some hint of the real quality of his character.

Why did Herod threaten Jesus? Why was the life of Christ a threatened life from the beginning to the end? Because good is always unpalatable to evil. That which is good always torments that which is bad. But had not Herod far greater influence in the world than Jesus Christ? No. But Herod could strike! True, but in doing so his arm would rot. Wherein, then, is the superiority of the influence of this threatened man? It is in its goodness. Good men have everything to hope from time; bad men have everything to fear from the lapse of days. Beauty can stand the wear and the tear of life—the inward and imperishable beauty of consummate goodness and divine truth. Goodness is a perpetual quantity, all penetrating, all searching, impartial, noble, a comfort in distress, a refuge to the weak, a tower and a defence to all men who wish to be right and to do right. Had it been a case of man against man, position against position, hand against hand, truly Herod would have made short

work of this controversy; he would have thrown down his antagonist, set his foot upon him, and with a loud "Ha, ha!" would have declared his triumph. But it was a question of light on the part of Jesus Christ,—light against darkness, truth against falsehood, God against the devil. No wonder, therefore, that when the controversy was so vital and so keen Jesus Christ should have been surrounded, if I may so express myself, by an atmosphere of menace, of threatening, of ill-will, and of latent determination to shed his blood. I am anxious to know how Jesus Christ will conduct himself under such circumstances. Herod has pronounced the authoritative word. Kings ought not to be forced to the humiliation of eating up their own messages. When the Tetrarch speaks he ought to have meaning in his speech. It will tell to the disadvantage of Herod if, after all this, he come to humiliation and shame. Some men think they have only to threaten and the earth will quake at once. It would appear that some persons are under the delusion that they have but to shake their finger in the face of the sun, and it will be night presently. Herod sent word to Christ to get out of his jurisdiction, or he would kill him. I am anxious to know how Jesus Christ, without home or friend, will conduct himself under such circumstances. Let us read how he answered the message of Herod the Tetrarch:—

"And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected" (ver. 32).

Here you have a picture of impotent rage on the part of Herod the Tetrarch. He thought that Jesus Christ would tremble under the message. He instantly treats it with disdain, with noble haughtiness of conscious superiority to the shaft that is levelled against him; and he describes Herod according to the moral traits of his character. He does not hesitate to call Herod a fox; a mere cunning, designing man, only courageous when there is no danger at hand; scheming and plotting in his den, but having no true bravery of heart; an evil-minded person, whose whole character is summed up in the word "fox." What —did Jesus Christ, then, call men names? Not in the usual sense of that expression. Did he call Herod a fox out of mere defiance or spite? He was incapable of doing anything of the kind.

When Jesus Christ spoke a severe word, the severity came out of the truth of its application. Is it not a harsh thing to call a man a liar? Not if he be false. Is it not very unsocial to describe any man as a hypocrite? Not if he be untrue. Wherein, then, is this wickedness of calling men names? In the misapplication of the epithets. It is wicked to call a man true if we know him to be untrue. There is an immoral courtesy; there is a righteous reproach. We do not use harsh words when we tell men what they really are. On the other hand, it is a matter of infinite delicacy to tell a man what he really is, because, at best, we seldom see more than one aspect of a man's character. If we could see more of the man, probably we should change our opinion of his spirit. In the case of Jesus Christ, however, he saw the inner heart, the real and true quality of the Tetrarch; and, therefore, when he described Herod as a fox, he spoke the word of righteousness and of truth. It was not an epithet; it was a character in a word; it was a man summed up in a syllable. Let us, therefore, be very careful how we follow this example, because we ought to have equal knowledge, before we take an equal position in this respect. On the other hand, let us beware of that simulation of courtesy, which is profoundly untrue, which is despicably immoral—the kind of thing which sets itself to catch the favour and the flattery of the passing moment. As men in Christ, we ought to be true with our speech; we ought to study morality of language, and never to say anything merely for the purpose of pleasing or passing through the temporary occasion with something like self-satisfaction. Then Herod's message produced no effect upon the work of the Son of God? Not the slightest in the world. But Herod was a man in authority, "brief authority"! Jesus Christ was the sovereign, and Herod was but the servant of a servant. What then did Jesus Christ profess in the jurisdiction of Herod? To cast out devils and to do cures. It was a moral work upon which he was set. Preachers of the gospel are not to be turned aside by the threatening hand of any man. If any one should, indeed, be doing aught to unsettle the minds of the people in relation to these political things which we hardly understand, he ought to be brought to law and called to order. But whoso is casting out devils and doing cures, here or there, under this form of government or that, let him not

heed the king's words, but proceed in the strength of God, and in the sufficiency of divine grace, to do his beneficent work!

We thought that Jesus Christ's labour would be cut short by this message from Herod. Jesus Christ must finish what he has begun. But is it not in the power of the great and the mighty to say to Christ, "You must stop at this point"? It is in their power, truly, to say it, and when they have said it they may have relieved their own feelings; but the great, the beneficent, the redeeming work of the Son of God proceeds as if not a word to the contrary had been said. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed; and behold, their rage came to nothing, and their fury recoiled upon themselves! "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Holy One shall have them in derision." Are we opposing Jesus Christ? Are we in any way setting ourselves against the advancement of his kingdom? It will be an impotent rage. Go and strike the rocks with your fist,—perhaps you may batter down the granite with your poor bones. Try! Go and tell the sea that it shall not come beyond a certain line, and perhaps the hoary billows will hear you, and run away and say that they be afraid of such mighty men. Try. You have nothing else to do, you may as well try. But as for keeping back this kingdom of God, this holy and beneficent kingdom of truth, no man can keep it back, and even the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Men may rage; men do rage. Other men adopt another policy; instead of rage and fury and great excitement, they set themselves against the kingdom of God, in an indirect and remote way. But both policies come to the same thing. The raging man who pulls down the wooden Cross and tramples it underfoot, and the man who offers a passive resistance to the progress of the kingdom of heaven, come to the same fate. The light shines on, noontide comes, and God gets his own way in his own universe. Behold, then, this is our glory and our strength and our hope, that none can hinder. In a secondary sense they may retard, they may put stumbling-blocks on the road, and for a moment they may be seeming to succeed; but, in the long run, this kingdom goes on until it has covered the earth with its lustre, and set a universal throne amidst mankind!

"Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (ver. 33).

Here is a picture of perfect reliance in the divine protection. On the one hand, Herod threatens; on the other, Jesus says, "I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following." Every man is immortal until his work is done. You cannot injure a hair of a man's head until the work that he is entrusted with be so far fulfilled as to ensure its entire completion. Men should not be soured by the opposition of their enemies. Some of us are prone to be so. When our lives are threatened, when our peace is jeopardised, we are disposed to say, "Then we shall have no more to do with this thing; we shall utterly abandon it; we shall settle down into peace and tranquillity, for we have had enough of vexation and disappointment." It is feeble to say so; it shows the poverty of our nature, if we talk in that way. I know not whose example we may be copying, but I know we are not transcribing the example of the Son of God. He did not resign his functions, he did not decline to go on with his work. He said, "I work in the name of God and for the good of mankind, and I must not be stopped." If we had more of that spirit, we should do more work in the world; we should have fewer resignations of Christian positions, less slinking away from the road of difficulty, and the path of bewilderment, and the course of pain. We should have more steadiness and consistency, not arising from pride and a sense of self-sufficiency, but coming out of the consciousness of a divine call, and an assurance that divine grace is more than sufficient for every occasion. What is the cure for all this willingness to run away from difficulty? The cure is in looking to the Master and not to the servant. We are the servants of God, and therefore the servants of one another. Tell me that I have received my ministry from man, and I shall take one view of the difficulties which may beset it. But tell me that that ministry has been imposed upon me from heaven, and that I am called and elect of God to do a certain work; and whatever may be the impediments round about me, there shall be sunshine in my heart, there shall be deep inexplicable peace in my soul; I shall regard the difficulties of the present occasion as but momentary, and the strength upon which I rest shall be nothing less than the omnipotence of God.

Whose servants are we, then? Who has called us to this Christian work? We are called of God, we are not called of man; and we must take our orders from heaven, and not from earth. But Herod threatens. Herod's threatening is but impotent breath! The king shakes his hand. His hand will drop off in the shaking! But our work must go on because we are called of God to do it. What rest this gives a man; what dignity in the midst of vexation and difficulty! What an assurance that all tumult and opposition can be but for a moment! How it assures us that in the long run the kingdom of heaven shall suffer nothing at the hands of mere violence! It is established upon a rock, and it is guaranteed of God. Jesus Christ saw the end from the beginning. In proportion as we have a wide outlook upon things, shall we have peace in our work and assurance of the blessedness of its end. Let us look at nothing in itself alone, or we may be discouraged by it exceedingly. But let us, following the example of Jesus Christ, think of to-day and to-morrow and the day following, and then we shall see how things bear upon one another, how they modify one another, and how what is difficult in detail becomes solved and harmonised in the great result. The Church would be quieter if the Church could see further. How far ought the Church to see? To this law, namely, God is on the throne. Christ has promise of the world, and whatsoever may be the difficulties and perplexities in the meantime, there will be worked out this great result. Are you threatened? Have you difficulty? Is the road very thorny, steep, hazardous? You have nothing to do with these things, except in a very temporary and secondary sense. God has promised to-day and to-morrow, and he has promised that on the third day things shall be perfected. Take him at his word, rest in his love, and as for the resources that are required, they are hidden in God's power!

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (ver. 34.)

Here is a picture of rejected and wounded love. We have had a picture of a threatened man; we have had a picture of impotent rage; we have had a picture of perfect reliance on the protection

of Almighty God. And behold, we have now the most pathetic of the pictures—a picture of rejected and wounded love. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not!" Jesus Christ's ministry, then, in this sense, was a failure. There are men amongst us who would not hesitate to say, that Jesus Christ's endeavours to save men had ended in a disastrous disappointment. This indeed is a wail, a cry of failure, an utterance of disappointment, —it is love in agony! Viewed within a certain limit of time, no ministry has been less successful than was the ministry of the Son of God. No man amongst us ever uttered a cry so heart-breaking as this over the apparent failure of his ministry. Jesus Christ went, with all his power, into some districts, and could not do many mighty works there because of the unbelief of the people. Was his ministry then a failure? Jesus wept over Jerusalem and said, he would have gathered the children of the city together, but the children would not be gathered by his love. Was the ministry of Jesus Christ then an ignominious failure? We must not look at things within these limitations. "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." You have striven for the better life of your child, and no good result seems to have blessed your ministry. Do not suppose that you have failed altogether in your efforts. You have been sowing seed; you have been laying up memories; and the time may come when the child will get a right view of all you have done for his welfare. Despair not; hope on. No man can speak a loving word or deliver a wise message, even to a child, without in some sort having his reward either in the approbation of a good conscience, or in seeing the work of the Lord so far prospering in his hand, that his child shall be twice born to him. We speak ignorantly oftentimes when we speak of failures. We only see parts of the case. We want to see everything within the compass of one day. We cannot wait until the day following, and the third day. Oftentimes our impatience betrays us, and we mourn a failure where we ought to see but an ebb in the tide. A man's heart-waves will come again, by-and-by, with still greater force and fuller volume!

The offer of salvation had been made, and the offer of salvation

had been rejected. This appears to me to be one of the most astonishing facts in human life. Given this state of affairs: An assembly of men, and a declaration from heaven that God is willing to save every man in the assembly, and that most of them should refuse to believe the message. Is there any anomaly so great? Is there a state of affairs less likely to secure our belief than that? And yet this is the condition of things. No man is so little believed as is the Word of God. Sometimes we feel wounded because our messages do not produce proper effect. But the heart of Almighty God is continually grieved, because of the rejection of the gospel. Jesus Christ here puts himself into an attitude most pathetic and touching. He says, "I would have gathered you. Why are you not gathered? Not because of any want of opportunity; not because of any deficiency of love on my part, but because of the stubbornness of your own will." After all, whatever metaphysical mysteries there may be about this view of the case, it satisfies the heart and the deepest love of mankind more than any other view. Christ entreating—men rejecting; the gospel offered—the gospel despised; and the blame coming down in judgment and condemnation upon those who have rejected the truth. I know not of any view of the case which goes so far to satisfy one's present intelligence and sense of right, and consciousness of religious concern for the children of men.

It is so with ourselves. The gospel is offered to us. Jesus Christ comes to every man, comes to us, and says, "I would gather up your life; I have redeemed you. Will you believe it? I have bought you with a price; may I not claim you as my own? I have an answer to your sin, a solution of your difficulty, a comfort for your whole being—will you believe it?" It is possible for us to turn round and say to him, No! Then what is the end of all this? The end is that God himself is exhausted. Mercy is the culmination of justice, and when mercy is despised the whole government of God is exhausted, so far as the possibility of human salvation is concerned. What is it that is offered to us then? Is it some great and hard thing that God requires at our hands? Verily not. It is that we, consciously sinful, consciously needy, shall listen to the appeals

of his love, and say, We believe those appeals with our whole heart, and we will live by them! That is the true meaning of faith. Not a mere assent of the mind, not a mere indisposition to controvert any statement which is made, but this,—I live by; I believe. Reverse the word "believe," and it is live by. It is the rendering up of the life to a certain truth, a governing of the whole being by the spirit of a certain statement. What is that statement? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." When a man can, with all the love and energy of his heart, lay hold upon this statement, he is a saved man. He is not a learned man, he is not a skilful controversialist, he is not what is generally known as a theologian. But he is a saved man; he has a germ in his heart that means pardon, purity, peace, heaven, rest, service!

Then there is a possibility of saying, as Jerusalem said, "I will not be gathered." What is the consequence of our availing ourselves of that possibility? This:

> "Behold your house is left unto you desolate" (ver. 35).

No man can explain the meaning of that word desolate, as used by Jesus Christ. Different words have different meanings, according to the position, the education, and the character of speakers. When you say desolate, you may mean uncomfortableness, a sense of loss and of want. When Jesus Christ says "desolate," no wind that ever moaned could speak it as he spoke it; no desert that ever withered could represent it as he meant it to be seen and felt by the heart. When Jesus Christ says, "Your house is left unto you desolate," I cannot describe what he meant by that word. It was no longer a home; it was no longer a place of safety, or a place of comfort, or a place of rest. When he said "Desolate," I may not tell what he meant. God grant that we may never know! It must be something indescribably awful when the face that has love in it and life and heaven is turned away! It is never turned away suddenly. It is turned away gradually, little by little, almost imperceptibly, until the

moment does come when it is turned utterly away, and then language fails to describe the blank, or properly set forth the dire desolation of the scene.

Are we to understand, then, from these words, that there is to be a limit to the period of trial which is allotted to mankind in this matter of salvation? Is there but a day of grace? Verily. A day! Then it has an end? Yes. "The sun of grace once set, will rise no more." When is that period of trial? Now. How long will the period of trial last? No man can tell. Shall I be spared another year? No man can promise thee that. Shall I hear another offer of salvation? I dare not say thou wilt. May this be the last time the call of heaven resounds in my ears? Yes. What then? "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." But I am old?

> "While the lamp holds out to burn,
> The vilest sinner may return!"

But I am young? Thou mayest never be old; for the young die, the little child withers off its parent-stem, and the youth in the very flush of his powers is sometimes cut down suddenly as with a stroke of lightning! What then? "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." But I am told that the will of man must be affected in some metaphysical and difficult way by the Spirit of God. Verily, we have not time to talk about metaphysics. Do you believe in your heart that you want salvation? "Yes." Do you believe that Jesus Christ offers you salvation? "I believe,—oh that my unbelief were helped!" It is enough to begin with; by-and-by you will be able to see further into the metaphysics of the case; you will be able to know more about the doctrine of the whole subject. In the meantime the first thing to be done is to avail yourself of any spark of desire towards the Son of God. We grow in knowledge as well as in grace; and the point at which we are saved is the point of faith. "But I have not great faith." Hast thou faith as a grain of mustard seed? Can any man say no to that? "I have no passionate, enthusiastic love." Hast thou one throb of affection? Is there anything in thy nature equal to a sigh of desire for the Son of God to save thee? That is enough to

begin with. As eternity discloses itself, thou shalt grow up into rapture and perfectness of love. Do not, I pray you, omit the pathos of the Saviour's words, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" It is a burst of grief, it is the cry of a wounded, pained love! Yet all the while he is pronouncing judgment. We mistake God when we suppose that his judgments are pronounced harshly, severely. He cries as mother never cried for a rebellious child, when he is passing condemnation upon any son of man. I know how possible it is even for preachers of the gospel so to pronounce words of judgment as to give a false impression to those who hear them. When Jesus said, "Your house is left unto you desolate," his voice was not haughty; there was no triumph or defiance in his tone. He wept tears of the heart when he spoke this word of judgment. And at last when he is on his throne and the angels are round about him, think you that he can say, "Depart, ye cursed!" without the tears coming into his eyes again? Will it be a stern word? Will it be a word pronounced with hardness, with harshness, with delight, that the hour of his triumphing is come? Oh, there will be memories enough of his love, recollections enough of his Cross, reminiscences enough of the Calvary which he bedewed with his blood, to cause his voice even then to falter!

Yet even here is mercy. Even perdition itself is an aspect of the divine mercy. Indiscrimination, as to character, would be unjust. God is merciful in the "depart," as he is merciful in the "come." We shall see it one day. May we never see it from the lower aspect, but from the higher. What then have I to offer to men? This: A present Saviour, a sufficient Redeemer, Jesus Christ, God the Son, willing to gather men. It is a tender word, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." No,—and we can never tell how much it costs the heart of God to say to any man, "Your house is left unto you desolate."

Chapter xiv. 7–11.

"And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

OUT OF PLACE.

THERE is a fitness of things. We all know it. We feel it, though we may not be able to explain it in words. There is an instinctive judgment about proportion, and social rightness, and personal action. There is a regularity in irregularity. Life is not so tumultuous as it seems. If we could see the action of all the lines of life we should see that beneath all the tumult and uproar, all the eccentricity and irregularity, there is a steady line, direct, inevitable, persistent. It is upon that line that God looks when he talks of progress and the final out-blossoming of all the things he has sown and planted in the earth. There is what is called tendency. It can hardly be measured; it is often imperceptible; it may require whole centuries in order to note the very least progress that that tendency has made. It is in the air, it is in the remoter thought of men, it is in the things which they say to themselves when nobody hears them. It is thus that God leads us on from one point to another, whilst we ourselves imagine that things are irregular and upsidedown and wanting in order and peacefulness. There are two looks: there is the outward and superficial look that sees nothing, and there is the penetrating and spiritual look to which you may trust for a true and profound criticism. There is therefore, I repeat, a fitness of

things, a sense of proportion, and colour, and weight, and values. We know one another at once; in a few minutes we soon learn whether the man should be here or there, or elsewhere: there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. There is an order of things which every one must approve. You may talk as much democracy and vulgarity as you please, but there is an order appointed of God, and you cannot upset it. It is not an order based upon mere money. When money is mere money there is nothing so poor on all the earth: nobody wants it, nobody will change it, nobody will trust to it. Money by itself is mockery, imposition, disappointment. There is no order or classification founded upon mere golden sovereigns. It is not an order of dress. Men shine brightly through their clothes. The clothes of a poor man are always radiant, not to the eye of vulgar judgment; but there is something about the man that makes his very cloak shine and glisten as no fuller on earth can whiten it. It is a marvellous process, wholly mysterious, and out of the way of the common run of criticism; but there it is, and we feel that the man has a right to be at the top. He does not look much, but let him give a judgment, let him utter one sentence, let him put his finger down upon one point in the argument; and at once the primacy is conceded. It is the ghostly, the mental, the spiritual, that rules all things in the long-run.

This order or fitness of things is not merely hereditary. We do not despise that which is hereditary. Because it ought to bring history with it. There ought to be a good deal of grey moss on certain names, and grey moss ought to be full of wise writing, it ought to be the treasure-house of experience and character and honour and service. But the fitness of things I refer to now is not founded either upon money or dress, or heredity, or anything that is external. It is a house not made with hands. Hands spoil everything. No man can pluck a flower without killing it. Plucking means killing. You cannot put back the drop of dew on the rose-tip that you shook off just now. That dew will not be handled. How sweet a thing it is, and beautiful, to know that our hands have done so little! And whatever our hands do time wears out, nature begins to quarrel

with at once. You no sooner put the roof upon your house than nature begins to take it off. There is an inner fitness, a spiritual relation and kinship, and when souls that know one another meet, how accidentally soever, they know one another instantly; an introduction would be a dishonour: the introduction comes up from eternity and is stamped upon the face of the occasion. There is a spirit in man.

I could imagine all the bankers in London gathered together with all their gold with them, pile on pile, and quite a snow-storm of financial paper; and I could imagine it being announced to them that Robert Burns, who hardly ever had a sovereign in his life, was at the door, and would be glad to look in if they would allow him. I could imagine all the bankers of London starting to their feet to receive the ploughman. How so? He has a right to such salutation. He has no paper, he has no bullion, but he has written words that make life doubly precious: he has sent angels through the air singing of common things and little things; he makes the house the pleasanter whenever he comes by his songs into it. He would be recognised at once as welcome, and honoured, and honourable. This is also a marvellous thing, that the spirit that is in man bows to spirit. For a time it may bow to the gold, but there are times when it recognises its true kinship, and when it rises and bows itself down again in humble and reverent homage before its own higher kindred. I could imagine all the lords of Great Britain and Ireland assembled under their gilded roof, and I could imagine circumstances under which they would also rise to their feet to welcome a stranger. Let it be announced to them that Beethoven was at the door and would like to come in, and there is not a lord amongst them that would not rise and say, Welcome! Why? He was no peer, he was a poor man. He has been set down even at great royal festivals to sit and dine apart, but he also was so much of a man and a king that when they set him down at the side-table he took up his hat and went out, and left them to dine without him as well as they could; and on other occasions he was called to the chief seat, where he had a right to be. It is mind that must be at the top; beauty of soul, pureness, grandeur of imagination, massiveness of intellect,

that must rule; and every other aristocracy must pay tribute to its majesty. There must always be an aristocracy of mind. I do not like the free-and-easy way which I have seen in some countries. I do not care for that broad and vulgar doctrine which says that all men are equal, because I know that is a lie. All men are not equal. There are masters and there are servants, and there must be so to the end of time. I am not now using these words in their ordinary social sense. There are master minds, master thinkers, men who catch the light of the morning first and throw it down upon the valleys. All men are equal?—is the landscape all equal? are the stars all equal? is nature all equal? Why, we must have masters, rulers, kings, and sometimes what we call tyrants; there must be an order or level of mind that must domineer for the time being, and prove its rectitude and harmony with the higher sovereigns after long time, so that we shall salute the dead. We often reserve our encomiums for the dead. We kill them, we crucify them, and then we sing hymns to their memory. We slay the prophets, and the next generation will come and build marble tombs over them, with elaborate epitaphs. But there should be and must be inequality now: it is inevitable, we cannot alter it. There must be class after class, lower and higher; and blessed is that nation the citizens of which can recognise these great distinctions of mind, and moral force, and pay appropriate tribute to them. I have no right to be equal in the presence of a man like Longfellow; a servile mind like mine must bow down at the feet of such a man, and look up to him. We know what he has written, we know what a master of music he was; his words are now part of the air we breathe, and when we see him we do not accost him with some false bald doctrine of "All men are equal, and I will stand in your presence covered." There are not many men who have a right to keep their hats on when Longfellow comes in. And what is true of the one poet is true of poets of our own. I would have therefore an exaltation of mind, genius, character above all things. The pure-minded man should be the sovereign of the age in which he lives.

But the speaker of this parable is no Epictetus, he is no Seneca, he is no mere moralist; he did not hang up these little pictures

for the purpose of having them admired as men admire cameos and forget them. He was the Son of God, and therefore there must be even in this parable, simply ethical and social as it appears to be, a gospel element, a sacrificial doctrine and thought and purpose. What is it? Is it true that Christianity is a religion of manners? Certainly Christianity teaches men how to behave themselves; and when a man does not know how to behave himself he is no Christian. But he believes in nine hundred and fifty-nine articles and doctrines and other addenda. So he may do, but he is no Christian if he be not courteous, if he does not know how to behave himself and restrain himself and exhibit excellence of conduct; I do not care if he multiply his beliefs by ten, it is nothing. If he have not charity, love, all-teaching, all-guiding love, he is nothing, and less than nothing. So Christianity is a religion of manners. "Be not weary in well-doing." We misunderstand that word oftentimes. It is not well-doing in the sense of doing well, doing things that are excellent, but doing things that are excellent excellently. The emphasis is on the adverb. A man may do excellent things and do them roughly; a man may preach the gospel in an ungospel tone; a man may bid you welcome to heaven as if he were threatening you with punishment. Literally, the apostle says, Be not weary in courtesy, in good manners, in the civil treatment of one another. A man is not candid because he is brutal. Courtesy does not ask for bluntness to sustain its charter and its dignity. Christianity is therefore, I repeat again and again, a religion of manners, of behaviour, of conduct. When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding sit not down in the highest room, but seek out the right place. Never be out of position; and if you have to elect the position always proceed upon the assumption that you are not the best man that is coming to the feast. Christianity insists upon self-knowledge. How honourable are you? How many men are there who are more honourable? Suppose there are fifty men coming to the wedding-feast, who is the most honourable? Blessed is he who says, Not I; I must wait until I see all the guests before I can form a judgment; it is my business to wait until all others are in. And depend upon it sooner or later there comes a destiny, a gentle, genial, beautiful, yet inexorable fate, that says, Friend, that is not your place, your

place is further up. You cannot keep men back from the places they are destined to occupy. God goes by the fitness of things which he himself has established. You need not edge and elbow and crush your way, in obedience to the vulgar exhortation, Now make your way in the world! Do nothing of the kind. Depend upon it, we are under a fatherly providence, and if you will look back upon your life you will see that you have never forced your way to any real position worth having, but have been led to it; men have heard a voice in the air, saying, This is the man. It is so in statesmanship, and in commerce, and in literature, in journalism, in preaching, in everything. There is a master of ceremonies, an angel of God, a spirit of right that says, You are wanted higher up: or, Sit where you are until you are sent for. God knows where you are, and when he wants you he will not forget you. You are in a little village, and you want to be in a great city, and you are impatient because a man of your bulk almost occupies the whole of the village. Draw yourself in, and wait just where you are, and when God needs you in the great city he will come for you certainly. If you live in this faith, you will have peace, you will have great measure of enjoyment in life. Oh, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, and he will arrange the wedding-table; and when the whole geometric figure is completed, and all the living people are at the table, they will look round and say, Why, this is a mosaic; this is a mosaic not made with hands. How well fitted we are, how admirably thrown together! Yet there was no throwing in it, except in the sense in which the clouds throw their showers upon the thirsty ground. Believe in God, live in God, and know that he knows you better than you can know yourself. You think you could occupy the top seat, but you could not. If you could believe that we should have no fret at home, no chafing, no mortified ambitions, but just that wonderful silence which often says to itself quite inaudibly to others, What is this? I wanted to be otherwhere, and yet I am here; for a time I was impatient, but now I see I would not change my place: all has been ordered wisely; he who is the Master of the feast hath done all things well.

A marvellous Christianity is this for continually—shall we say

eternally?—striking the self out of the man. It will not rest until it has got out of you and me every little weight of selfishness that is lying in the most secret part of our hearts. In this very chapter the doctrine is laid down in graphic language:—"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." What, may I not retain one little atom of my very self? And the gospel says, No. Then what are the terms of acceptance with the higher life? God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The words are at least four in number:—humble himself, deny himself, crucify himself, mortify himself. Are these the terms of entrance? Name them again: Humble, deny, crucify, mortify. Then where am I? Nowhere; killed, slain, the last shred of selfishness crushed: now you are prepared to receive the kingdom of heaven.

An awful word is the word "mortify." What does it literally mean? Make dead. Unless a man make dead himself, he cannot begin to live. You know the term well enough in your deeds of partnership and deeds of arrangement and deeds of settlement—"That he the said A. B. shall be as if dead." You have often written yourselves dead on your legal parchments: that is just what you must do in this entrance into the wedding chamber; you must have no self, no selfishness, no self-idolatry, no self-trust; you must hate your own life; then God can begin to do something with you. Ambition killed the race; wanting the next and higher thing brought us to ruin. That spirit will ruin the Eden of your life, and blight the Eden of your home, and bring you down to disappointment and shame and misery. What you have to do therefore is to get rid of self. "Unless a man deny himself he cannot be my disciple." You say it is necessary for you to live, and God says it is not. There is no need for you to live another moment. A man may say, "I must do something for a living." No; that is atheism; there is not one whit of gospel in that. It is absolutely needless that you or I should live another moment. And if we cannot live without sharp practice, and without injustice, and without taking up the room

that belongs to other people we had better not live; it is not life. In some money there is no comfort. Once a man got hold of thirty pieces of silver, fifteen in each hand, and his hands were scorched, and he took it back and could hardly shake it off, and he said, "Take it again, I have betrayed innocent blood!" Why not make the confession and keep the money? You cannot; restoration follows confession. There is some honour in which there is no real sense of dignity; it is a thing of feathers and air and paint and gilt. True honour cometh only from God; it belongs to righteousness and to obedience.

Here then is the great Moralist and the great Teacher, and especially the great Saviour, saying to us by parable and by doctrine, If you want to come into my kingdom one man must be killed. Who is that one man? Yourself. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." We might all find it if we really wanted to do so.

Chapter xv.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

"And a certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living" (vers. 11, 12).

THE man was a man of substance. It may be a fortunate or an unfortunate circumstance, as events may prove. There is nothing wrong in being a substantial man in society; yet the very fact of a man having great riches may be one of the greatest calamities that ever occurred in his life. The younger son did not say, "Father, I am tired of a lazy life, and now I am determined to do something for my own bread. I have been turning over this great problem of life in my mind, and I find that life is a responsibility, life is a discipline, and though I have been born under circumstances of conspicuous advantage, yet I think it right to go out and do something to make my own position, to establish my own title, to be called and to be treated as a man." What did the young man say? He said, "Father, I am a youth of fortune; please give to me the portion of goods that falleth to me." He had been scheming, it appears, but scheming in a wrong direction. He had been scheming in the direction of self-enjoyment; he was going out to taste the sweets of liberty; the time had come, in his consciousness, when he thought that he would enjoy a little more freedom, and the first notion that occurred to him was to get clear of his father. Many a man has had precisely the same lucky suggestion presented to his mind by the great enemy. The father has stood in the way; the father's old-world notions have been impediments in the path of supposed progress and enjoyment and liberty; and the young man's great concern has been to get rid of his own father! It looks well. "Let me open a door in my father's house, go into the wide world with the portion of goods that

falleth to me, and all will be sunshine and beauty, music and rest." It is evident that the young man was not a man of robust understanding; yet he was not to be blamed for having had very little experience of the world. He thought that life would be enjoyable if only he had liberty. I propose now to follow him in his journeyings, to see what his experience was, to collect it for the advantage of all who need a moral exhortation upon this point, and to inquire at last whether there cannot be some better way of spending the days which God has put into our keeping as a trust.

The young man gathered all together, took his journey into a far country, thinking that the farther from home the sweeter and larger would be the liberty. I fear he has planned something in his heart, which he would not like to do just within the neighbourhood of his own father's house. If not, he gave way to the sophism which exercises a very malign influence upon a good many of us, namely this: That we must go a long way off in order to be blest, not knowing that the true blessing grows just at arm's length, forgetting that the fountain of the truest joy springs within us and not outside of us. Yet how many there are who travel mile on mile to get joy, to secure rest; when they are forgetful of the fact that they might have it without going out of themselves, except in so far as they go into God and truth and purity!

The young man has gone then, and a merry day he has of it at first. His pockets are full, he has health on his side, many a pleasant memory sings to him, he has not yet tasted of the bitterness of life. It would be cruel if a man who is going to serve the devil could not have just a few hours of introductory enjoyment, or something that he mistakes at least for delight. A man cannot cut off good ties all in a moment; the ligaments require some time to get thoroughly through; and whilst the spell of old memories and traditions is upon the man he imagines that he is going out into a large and wealthy place, and that every step he takes is a step in the direction of comfort and honour. When he got into the far country what did he do? He wasted his substance in riotous living; stepped out of liberty into license.

At one bound he seems to have cleared the region of discipline and entered into the sphere of licentiousness. He wasted his substance. There is nothing so easy as waste. It does not require any genius to waste property, to waste beauty, to waste life. Any man can waste what he has. It is easy to do the destructive part of life's work; the difficulty is to gather, to accumulate, to amass, and yet to hold all that has been brought together in the right spirit, and to administer it to the right ends. Why did he show such bad skill? How does it come that in a moment he was master of the art of wasting? Because he had never mastered the art of earning his own living. Everything had been provided for him. When he came down to breakfast —towards ten, the family hour being seven in the morning— he found the things still waiting for him, and at dinner he found the table lavishly spread without his having worked for a single morsel of food that was upon the board; when he was sick the physician was within call; and when he felt any desire to please himself his father and his mother were but too ready to gratify his desires. Now the young fool goes out into the world to find his joy in wasting, destroying, trampling under foot all the things that he has got! And what blame? We wonder if the rod ought not first to have been used upon his father? It is a question (if we may modernise the instance) whether the old man at home was quite blameless in this matter. But so it is; men mistake enjoyment and the scope of pleasure; they forget that in the absence of discipline there can be no true profound enjoyment of any of the greatest gifts of God. He who escapes discipline escapes one of the purest enjoyments; he who mistakes license for law goes downward to the pit at a rapid rate! Let us read:

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want" (ver. 14).

Such men help to bring about famines,—men who eat all and produce nothing, men who are consumers and non-producers. These are the men that make famines. A man that will eat up a whole wheatfield and do nothing in the way of sowing, is the man that will make a famine anywhere,—logically, necessarily. He is eating, appropriating, consuming, absorbing,—never

working, never doing anything in return. Why, here is cause and effect. The man is eating the things that are round about him, and when the last meal has gone, he says, "There is a famine in the land." Of course there is. A man cannot always go on consuming and not producing without soon coming to the end of his patrimony, and finding a famine staring him in the face. "And when he had spent all"—all that he possessed admitted of being spent! You see my meaning? He had nothing that could not be spent. All that he had was outside of him. A man could get through the very stars of heaven if every one of them was a golden coin; a man could spend the sands upon the sea-shore if every sparkling atom was a silver coin! He could get through it all and be a pauper at the last! Who is he, then, who cannot spend all? A man who lives spiritually, a man of character, of purpose, of high conception, of noble sympathy, a man who knows truth and loves truth never can spend his fortune. Once that fortune was attempted to be described, and the words of the description I remember well. "An inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." May I ask any young man what he possesses in the way of property, substance, security? If he says that all he has is outside of him, then I say it is very possible for him to get through it all, and at the last be compelled to face a famine. Gold can be spent; ideas cannot be wasted by the wise man. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty. Be sure of this, that any man in society who has not given back a fair equivalent for what he gets in the way of bread, and dress, and physical blessing, is the man who is working mischief in society,—that man is one of the causes of destitution and famine.

"And he began to be in want" (ver. 14).

A new experience came upon him. And oh! it is pitiful when a man who has never known want just begins to feel it. Better be born at the other end of things; better be born in poverty than in riches to be spent so. You should have seen him when he felt the first pang. It was pitiful! The man had a fine face; there was a gentle expression upon it at times, all the signs and tokens of refinement had not been quite taken out of it; and

when the young man began to feel the pain of want, I was sorry for him; I saw his blanched face, and saw him look round as if he might see his father somewhere, or his mother, and there was nothing but strangers, emptiness, desolation! He called out, and the mocking echo answered him. It was very sad, but it was right,—it was right! If a man can go upon a course like that, and at the end of it be prosperous and joyful, having fulness of satisfaction; why, then, life is not worth having, and destiny is cruelty. I saw him in want, friendlessness, pain, hunger; and, though I feel that it might have been myself standing there, yet I own that it was right.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine" (ver. 15).

He was nothing to the citizen; the citizen cared nothing for him. The citizen did not say, "Let me see your hand, and I will tell you whether you were born a gentleman." He did not say, "How have you been brought up, young man? and I will try to fall in, as far as possible, with the traditions of your youth." Nothing of the sort. No, no. It seems a little way from the man's father to the citizen,—but oh, it is a long, long way! He left his father and went to the citizen. Both men! But the one was as a shining angel, and the other as a tormentor sent of providence to bring the young man to his senses. Yes, sir, you will say good-bye to your father, and care nothing for him, but the first man you meet will be a rough one. Thank God for that! I thank God that there are rough men into whose hands young people fall, who have not known how to value a father's care and a mother's love. Young men must at some time or another come under the rod. They may delay the time of discipline, they may put off the time of judgment, but it comes upon them. Events are God's servants; the great purposes of Heaven are working themselves out by events which we cannot number, and which we cannot control. At the end it will be seen that there is a rod in the law, that there is a God on the throne, and that no man can do wrong without having judgment brought to bear upon him!

But could he do nothing better than feed swine? No.

There was the great mischief. His father (again we modernise the instance) had never taught him a trade. Shame on his father! We blame the father more than we must blame the young man, in so far as this may be true. What could the young man do? Nothing. He had no skill in his fingers; he had no power of putting things together so as to make a living out of them. All he could do was the meanest work,—he could feed swine. Do you feel it to be somewhat a hardship, young man, that you are sent to work? It is the beginning of your prosperity, if rightly accepted. Do you say that you ought to have been something finer? There is time to prove how far you are worthy of elevation and honour. Meanwhile, whatever you are, do your work with all patience, believing that he who does so will in the end have a sufficient and appropriate reward. Let us follow him in his menial employment and see how it fares with him,—with him who was once so pampered, who was the delight of the household and the hope of his father's life.

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him" (ver. 16).

Is that true? It is literally true. Is it true in this young man's experience? Then it is true in ours. We cannot allow any dispute upon this for a moment, so far as the book is concerned, because the same thing is done every day amongst ourselves. While the man spent his substance in riotous living he had friends, he had companions; there were many who shared his bounty and hospitality,—where are they now? They are not within his call; they do not know him now. He spent his money freely, and so long as he had any left they lived with him, and were his friends—they prostituted that sweet and holy name friend, in order that they might the better accomplish their own purposes; and as soon as they saw him lay down the last coin, and they had helped him to devour it, they turned their backs upon him and declared they never knew him! No man gave unto him, though he had given to so many men. Bad men always disappoint their victims. Bad men always make dupes and leave them. I would to God I could teach that thoroughly, effectively. The bad man cannot be a friend! The bad man who follows you, tracks you about, waits for you at the ware-

house door, and spends your substance for you, cannot be a friend. He looks like a friend, but he is an enemy in disguise. "He apparently loves my company." Not a bit of it! He loves what you have; he loves your money. "He seems to prefer my society to anybody else's." He will ruin you to suit his purpose! The bad man cannot be a friend. He can be a sneak; a vampire; he can suck your blood, but he cannot be a friend! Only he can be a friend who can suffer for you, sympathise with you, own you in darkness as well as in light, defend you in danger, as well as smile upon you in the time of prosperity. I know this to be true. It has been burnt into our history as with a red-hot iron. This is no poet's fancy; this is no touch of dramatic genius,—this is sadly, tragically, awfully true. It is not long since that a case in point occurred within the sphere of my own observation. A young man was taken up by a crafty villain, pursued by him, flattered by him,—he could call upon this man to do what he pleased for him; there was plenty of money on the one side, and a bottomless pit of perdition on the other, along with a smooth outside, with a fair tongue, with a gentle tone of expression. As long as there was any property to be squandered the villain was at hand. He would do anything; set the young man up houses, and find him means of so-called enjoyment; he was his right-hand man, making all his arrangements, opening all the gates for him, and indicating the road that he was to take. And when the young man had spent thousands upon this policy, it came of course to a break, it came to a crisis. Where was his friend? Did he turn round and say, "I will be your friend still"? No. He said, "I will drag that young man through the mire." This was not an accident—a single separate event standing by itself. It is a doctrine, a truth, that badness never can be sincere, that badness is always selfish, and that selfishness will always allure and destroy its dupes. And the young man's future went so. The old man at home perhaps had some difficulty in getting the property together. He used to be a workman himself, a man of good understanding and of great industry in matters of business, and it took him some twenty-five years to amass the property, and the young man spent it in a month! Be your own executor; you lay up money and you know not who will spend it. You say, "Five

—seven—ten thousand for my youngest boy. That will be a nice start in life for him; he will never know hardship as I have known it; he will never have to eat brown bread as I have eaten it; he will begin in very comfortable circumstances, and be able to take a very high position at once." Take care! He may spend it in a fortnight! See, at one toss of the dice your estate may be gone! He may be doing but a poor thing for his child who tries to turn nine thousand into ten thousand for him. Better send him to shoe-blacking, to crossing-sweeping, better make him a boy waiting in the shop, than so to train him as not to know the value of what you have amassed for his advantage. It may seem hard that he should begin where you began; but depend upon it that unless the young man be of singularly high principle and fine integrity, you are laying up for him that which will turn into a scorpion and sting him!

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" (ver. 17.)

Mark the beauty of the expression,—When he came to himself. All sin is insanity; all wickedness is madness. A wicked man is not himself. He has lost self-control; all his best memories have been darkened or forgotten; and he is no longer to be counted a sane man in the true and proper sense of that term. Wickedness blinds the intellectual faculties, disorders a man's vision—spiritual, intellectual, moral; gives him exaggerated notions of all other persons and things. A course of wickedness has a madhouse at the end of it! How much we are mistaken upon this matter of insanity. We think only those persons insane who are imprisoned in asylums, who are restrained by a strait waistcoat, who have watchers and keepers appointed over them. We say about such, "Poor creatures, alas! they are insane!" not knowing that there is an insanity of wickedness, a moral insanity,—and of all insanity moral insanity is the worst. Responsibility begins there. If a man's reason be blighted, then responsibility goes along with it,—he cannot distinguish the right hand from the left in morals. But where the insanity is moral, where there is a love of evil, where iniquity is rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, then there is obligation, there is responsibility, and where there is responsi-

bility there is the possibility of damnation! "When he came to himself." He never would have come to himself but for his poverty, his desertion, his pain. So, Almighty God has strange ministers in his sanctuary. All his ministers are not mere speakers of holy and beautiful words. He hath employed some grim teachers to instruct a certain class of mankind in the first principles of right: grief, hunger, pain, homelessness, ill-health, desertion. These are all the hired servants of the Father. He sends them out after sons that have left the old, dear home. This young man had to thank his swine-feeding, his experience of famine, his homelessness, as the beginning of his better life. Many of us probably have had to do precisely the same thing. We found no religion in luxury; no altar in the carpeted room; so long as we had everything within reach and call, our hearts never went out of us in incense of praise, in utterance of prayer. Not until we were breadless, homeless, until we exchanged fatherhood for citizenship; not until we got under influences that were keenly bitter and tormenting in their effects, did we begin to know that we had done wrong. Some of us, again, have had to thank God for poverty, for ill-health, for friendlessness, for being left out on the streets, without bread to eat or a pillow to rest upon, the rain dashing into our faces and no man knowing us. It was then we called for God, and it was then the Father met us! What did the young man say? Did he say, "Now I have taken this step, I cannot retrace it; I have said farewell to my father, I am not the man to succumb, to go back to my father's door and say, 'Please be kind enough to open this door to me again.' No, no; I will rise up from this state of poverty—I have been suffering by a heavy hand—I will yet make a man of myself; I will get back my fortune, I will renew my companions, and my latter time shall be better than my first"? If he had done so he would have shown but another phase of his insanity. He took the right course; he humbled himself; he got a right view of his way. He felt it to have been bad—bad in its purpose, bad in its conception, bad in its whole course. He said, "I will go without a defence; I will get up no argument; I will not explain how it came to be; I will just go and throw myself at his feet and say, 'Make a servant of me, only take me back again.'" He won the battle then! The moment he threw off his pride,

the moment he said, "I shall not stand before him, but fall down at his feet," he was victor! So long as there is a spark of pride left in a man, as between himself and God, a great battle has to be fought. So long as a man thinks he can make out a sufficient statement, an explanation of how he came to be wrong, and to do wrong, and can defend himself, in some degree at least,—he is far from the kingdom of heaven.

What, then, is this that we have to say? This: there must be no excusings, no pleadings, no apologies, arguments, defences or palliations. Man must surrender; he must say, "There is no health in me; I yield; I have grieved thee, insulted thee, wounded thee: it seems as if I never could be a son again. Make something of me in thy house still. I will keep a door, I will follow the poorest of thy servants to be his servant,—only have me somewhere in thy care, dear, grieved, broken-hearted Father!" When a man begins to talk so he is saved—is saved! The young man went forward with his speech, a beautiful speech, not a single strain of selfishness in it; all a speech of condemnation, self-renunciation. He got so far with it, and the father interrupted him, fell on his neck, and kissed him, and said, "Make a son of him again." It is God's way with the sinner. He never lets us finish our speech of penitence. We struggle and sob on to about a comma, or at most a semicolon, and then his great love comes down and says, "That will do; begin again; begin at the Cross, my son; my child, begin at the Cross!" Were I to talk through many hours, even until sunrise, I could say no more than this, that a right state of acceptance before God is a state of self-abhorrence, self-distrust, self-renunciation. So long as we stand, God will not have anything to do with us, because he cannot. But when we fall down at his feet; when we feel our nothingness and own it—it is then that he would put all heaven into our hearts.

Chapter xv.

PERSONAL PRONOUNS.

WE have often lectured on the parable of the prodigal son without bringing out these pronouns vividly and emphatically:—"My son"; "thy brother"; "let us eat, and be merry." "My"; "thy"; "us." The prodigal has his own pronoun; he says, "I will arise, and go to my father," not my brother's father, but my own. Repeat these pronouns—"my," "thy," "us." We cannot keep great joys in the singular number. You must at one point or another pluralise. Let us follow the course of this little river pronominal.

"*My son.*"—The father recognised facts. He said, "My son was dead." He was not in a school, he was not a boy of equivocal behaviour; he was not a diamond oft colour, a little yellow but still a diamond. The father did not thus confuse his own understanding and conscience. He looked facts dead in the face. Until we do that we can make no sound progress. We shall never evangelise the world if we think the world is only in a swoon. The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. He has not come to prop up a reeling polity; he is going to reconstruct shattered ruin. "Dead"—how dead? There is a dead that has poetry in it; there is a dead, a death, which means that the family have taken a bulb and planted it, sure that it will flower in heaven. That is not death: but the dear friend is thus merely planted or sown. We might sing at such a planting. But for this poor little natural feeling of ours which overflows its own narrow channels, we might sing loud sweet psalms in the cemetery, praising God that another bulb was put into the earth with the assurance that it would be all flowers presently. The son was not dead in this sense, or the father never would have wished him back again; he would have

made no feast for him if he had returned. Given the conviction, not the mere sentiment, that our departed ones are in heaven, and when we are asked to give a judgment in the court of the highest reason and reverence, we should say, Do not disturb them, let them alone in their high ecstasy; it is too cold down here for such as they are now. "Dead"—twice dead, all dead; the body alive but the soul dead; understanding, conscience, imagination, heart, all the highest powers and qualities of the soul dead. That is death. Death is not the worst evil that can befall any man or any family or any nation. There are living men who are too dead to be buried, there are living forces emitting continual and devastating pestilence. When we have them in the house the house is no longer sweet; though we open all the windows of the dwelling and let in the strongest west wind, it cannot quell that miasma. Such were some of us: "we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Do not let us trifle with realities, and say that the human heart is "not as good as it ought to be." Whilst we are thus talking we never can understand Christ and his gospel. We must get to the tragedy of sin before we can get to the tragedy of the Cross. They go together; in a sense, they balance one another; in a sense they are equivalent to one another. If you set down a unit on the one hand and say that it is equal to a fraction on the other, you are arithmetically wrong; and if you set down sin on the one side as a mere offence against moral colour and the Cross on the other, then are you guilty of creating an infinite and shocking disproportion.

"*Alive again*,"—alive in his soul, in his conscience, in his reason, in his sense of right; alive in his broken-heartedness. That is the point at which true life begins. True life begins at contrition, at self-renunciation, at self-hatred. When we are most deeply in tears we are nearer than we ever were before our loudest, sweetest song. "Alive," because he has come home. Life seeks the centre; life yearns for fatherhood; life turns round, as it were, and in dumb quest asks for home. The young man was alive the very moment he said, "I will arise." He was alive before the father knew it. He had been alive some considerable time, walking on it may be day after day, for he had to come

from "a far country"; yet he was alive all the time, and he himself hardly knew it. We sometimes pray without fully seizing all the meaning of the act. Many a man who would almost resent the idea that he prays cannot help praying, in some form, in some degree, in some sense. The yearning, the backward look to the things left long ago, the question in the heart as to how they all are at home; the unconfessed looking out for the post if haply there may be a letter from the old place: all these are aspects of prayer, they are expressions of desire, they are hints at a great gnawing want in the soul. It is a good thing for a man to have even a passing feeling of this kind. It is an excellent thing for a man to take pen and paper and sign some holy vow. He may break it to-morrow, but he has had four-and-twenty hours of it. That has done him good. He may not break it to-morrow; the four-and-twenty hours of release which he has had may prepare him for four-and-twenty more, and the eight-and-forty may constitute quite a defence between him and the old temptation. It is good for a man to come to his old church and hear one of the old hymn-tunes and try to take part in the singing, though it be musically but a poor part: somehow it connects him by fine filaments with things sacred and ineffable. The whole world is changed from that point of view; the grass is greener, and the birds never sang with so penetrating and comforting a trill before. These are all mysteries, but they are mysteries of education, they are all stimulants in an upward direction, they are all part of that marvellous and inexplicable apocalypse which we call Life.

"*My son*": did not distance destroy both the noun and the pronoun? No. We go back to our mother tongue: and it was part of this man's mother tongue to say concerning each of his children, "My son." We are sometimes suddenly startled into our real way of speaking. There is a conventional way, or there is a way to which we have schooled ourselves, so that we say, The next time we meet the offender we will address him swiftly. So we might if we had a week's notice of his coming; but the Lord oftentimes makes suddenness quite a part of his process of human education. Before we are aware of it there stands the man straight in front of us,—the prodigal, the lost son, the lost

daughter, and we have not time to do anything but cry. We were going to be very haughty; we were going to treat the offender off-hand. Trust the heart that was once really in love with you, that truly and deeply felt the necessity of your nearness and comfort; and though there may be for a time alienation between you, yet there shall come another time when the old language shall utter itself and familiar cries shall put down all the meaner music. John B. Gough told us of a husband who had acted so badly that he could no longer be kept in his own home. He had been taken into that home again and again, and again and again he had wrecked it. In his old age he thought he would try again. He found his way to his wife, who would not speak to him, or approach him, or have anything to do with him. She recited the story of her wrongs, and no honest man could listen to her without taking her side and rejecting the so-called husband as a plague intolerable. Mr. Gough was present at the interview. It was a fruitless communication. The old man, he said, rose to retire, and taking up his old muffler for his throat, he was trying with feeble and fumbling hands to put it on. He could not do so, and his wife gave it just one touch in the right direction: but that one touch brought her to herself; she fell on his neck and kissed him. It is the touch, the sudden impression, the unlooked-for vision, the thing we never calculated—it is that that touches us with a new and higher, brighter and diviner relation.

"*Thy brother.*"—The pronoun "thy" comes out of the pronoun "my,"—"thy" because "my." An hour before the elder brother had no brother. Even nominally he would reject and scout the idea, but the father called him "thy brother" because he first called him "my son." Until we get the larger relation right we never can get the inferior relation put right. The one depends upon the other. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, strength, and——it is out of that "and," that copulative word, that falls all neighbourliness, all true fraternity, all sacred and noble quality. The mischief is that men will try to work the other way. Why do we attempt to overget gravitation? Gravitation never has been overcome but temporarily. The little lark overcomes it; the ascent of the lark is

an argument against gravitation, but a very short and lame argument. The lark will soon come down again. Even larks, and singing birds of every name, and eagles, and eagles that dare the sun, soon tire of wrestling with gravitation. The action of gravitation in this sense is a movement from God to man, from the first commandment to the second; and until we have obeyed the first commandment we cannot touch the second, or if we do touch it we shall soon drop it again as involving a tremendous and impossible task. Here therefore stands the Church in its supreme majesty as the reformer and saviour of the world. It works along the right line, it keeps step with gravitation, it moves with the action of God. Of course, the elder brother had an argument. He is a despicable fool who cannot argue about something. He would be an intolerable person who could not find fault with some other person. That *rôle* is always open to us if we care to make havoc of life's finest opportunities. Find a man with an argument, and you find a man with a grievance, and find a man with a grievance and he can never go into the feast. He feeds on hunger, he asks a blessing in the open air upon tables spread with nothing; he takes a pride in his very food. He is a home-made martyr to a home-made conscience. Never trouble about the elder brother. Why do preachers try to explain such a character? He is not worth explaining. You join the sacred revel, find your way to the interior banqueting-room where soul is brought to soul in new wedlock, and new fatherhood, in new sonship, and let the elder brother fill himself to satisfaction with the east wind.

"*My*"—"*thy*"—"*us.*" Who is meant by that "us"? The explanation is in the parable. The father said to his servants, Take such and such a course, "and let us eat and be merry." And they began to be merry. It is a poor joy that does not overflow the parlour and get down to the kitchen. It is a party not worth going to if the servants are not interested in it; it is a mean, despicable kind of uninviting show; it is not a festival. Great emotions do not know who are men or kings or peasants or servants or masters. Great emotions touch our human nature; they are humane, civilising, fraternising, uniting, consolidating. Herein is the marvellous miracle that is wrought

by Christian sympathy. Men who are under the influence of the Cross have all things in common. That rule has never been suspended and has never been put out of practice. There is a literal way of reading the story which ends in saying, All this sort of thing has passed away. Nothing of the kind. It cannot pass away. It is immortal because the love of Christ is eternal. Our love for Christ may have removed, our passionate loyalty to the Cross may have gone down in volume and quality. If we could bring back the love we could bring back the true communism. No man would say that anything he had was his own. Blessed be God that miracle is always possible. It is always possible that love to Christ may be so great, efflorescent, exuberant, that man shall simply forget his own individuality and petty concerns, and call all hunger to share his loaf. We shall certainly go down at the social end if we go down at the spiritual beginning. There is a law of cause and effect in these things. Keep up your religion if you would keep up your morality. Keep up your Christianity if you would keep up your socialism. Keep up your prayer if you would keep up your service. Knees unused to bending before God soon tire in endeavouring to run the errands of men.

Blessed be God for these eternal pronouns. You could not live on "it" and "they," although "they" is plural enough to include a great many things. You want the "my," the "thy," the "us,"—personal, warm, sympathetic, human. This is what Christ came to work out amongst us. This is Christ's own sweet parable. The Man who spoke this parable ought not to have been crucified. This parable should have saved him from murder. It is a beauteous poem. It has the music of all generations in it. He who spake it was the Son of the carpenter so-called. True: but Christ was not murdered. The speaker of that parable never could have been merely killed. He gave himself. Said he, "I lay down my life: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." That man was not a victim, he was a Priest. To his priesthood I call all the sons of men who have wandered into a far country.

Chapter xvii. 6.

"And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you."

FAITH POWER.

YOU either believe these words, or you do not. Probably there is not a man who has not neglected them. Was there ever such a declaration made by human lips? How we hasten over verses of this range and quality, and get into easy reading as soon as we can! But here stands the solemn, incredible word. Words of this kind should not be read once only, for the ear may refuse them full admission, and the memory may perform quite a miracle of forgetfulness; we should say the words themselves over and over again until they become part of our very consciousness. "And the Lord said . . . ." It requires an introduction not less august. Had it been—"And Peter said," we should have made short work of the speech. "And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." If this is not a fanciful speech it is the most neglected doctrine in all the book. Not a Christian soul in the wide universe believes a tittle of it: so we cannot call ourselves Christian. We only become Christians at the difficult points: along the common road we belong to all denominations of thinkers; it is at hard places, at new departures, at cross-roads, at the Cross, that we become real Christians. We always seek to lessen the meaning of supernatural declarations; we call them figures of speech, we refer to them as mystic idealities; things written in clouds, and framed with stars; we are willing to give them any amount of transcendental honour, but we never accept them as direct, imposing immediate responsibilities, and offering an instantaneous heaven. What wonder that spirituality is at a discount? We hold our

religion with the fingers of our reason; we take it up and set it down as an argument, we surround it with many learned books we have never read, and think that so surrounded it is perfectly secure. The one thing we have not done is the only thing we are asked to do, and that is to live our piety. It is for the men of faith to recall and re-establish the doctrine of faith. Even believers that seem to be supreme carry with them a measuring-rod with which to mark off the ideal, the spiritual, and the infinite into inches. We are never lost in God. We exclude the supernatural, and then praise God; we write moaningly—and remuneratively—about the decay of supernaturalism, and then never think of using our soul's wings, but always do we walk with the feet of our body. All this must be reformed and driven away. Nothing is clearer to me than that the Church is dying. The Church ought to die when it loses its distinctiveness; when it ceases to represent faith, it is effete, it has survived its function, it is fit only to be cast down and trodden under foot of men. When the Church is only one of a number of kindred institutions, decent, respectable, self-protecting, self-promoting, the Church has ceased to have any reason for existence. We need the voice of the Lord—great, noble, resonant, musical; a majestic voice—to speak to us some doctrine the reception of which will give us distinctiveness and therefore holy influence.

What can be more rational than the basis of the doctrine which the Lord thus declares? What is it when put into other than distinctively religious words? It is simply that mind is greater than matter. "If ye had faith"—a high mental condition, a new spiritual consciousness, the faculty which lays hold upon God—you could uproot mountains, and transfer forests to the midst of the sea; you could give eyes to the blind, you could wake the dead from their undreaming sleep. Thus divested of theological colour and prejudice, we come face to face with a new philosophy, namely, that mind in its spiritual fire, in its conscious dominance, is greater than all things we denominate material. Yet we have put our necks under these things, and have accepted the yoke of a humiliating bondage. We who ought to have played with the laws of nature have lassoed ourselves with them, and asked what they were going to do next. We have lived inverted lives, we

have given away our heritage, and have not received even a mess of pottage in return. Is it possible that we have not faith as a grain of mustard seed? Does that refer to quantity or to quality? In the first instance evidently to quantity, for the apostle said in the preceding verse, "Lord, increase our faith": give us more faith;—and the Lord said, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed," which is the smallest among seeds, ye should work miracles with it. Yet, in the next place, it may be a question of quality; for, though the mustard seed is the least among seeds, yet when it is grown it becomes an exceeding great tree, and the birds of the air lodge in its branches. So with this Christian faith: though quantitatively small, yet in its quality it is vital, expansive, always ascending into largeness, fruitfulness, hospitality. We are not called upon to ask for a little faith, small as a grain of mustard seed, but we are called upon to ask for the mustard-seed-like faith, that being planted will not die, but will rise and grow and strengthen, and be a church for the singing birds. It ought to be possible to receive from our Father in heaven direct guidance as to all the practical affairs of life. Observe the expression "direct guidance," not some hazy, cloudy, impalpable impression. Otherwise history is living backwards. We have less communion with God than the old prophets had; where they heard the word of the Lord we simply catch an impression which we translate according to our uppermost instinct or our most recent prejudice. Let the Church lay down this doctrine: It is possible to receive from our Father in heaven direct guidance in all the practical affairs of life; then the Church has a distinct position to occupy. Those who do not belong to the Church admit an intellectual action in life; they speak of having impressions, convictions, and refer with great confidence to the action of instinct and the play of reason: it is only after that we must look for the beginning of Christian faith, and the distinctiveness of spiritual action and reliance. If we pass through all the tragedy of Calvary merely to accept the nostrums and the dogmas of old paganisms, or current rationalities, we have squandered our strength, and by elaborating our circumlocution we have lost time and pith and quality.

We must, perhaps with a ruthless hand, clear the ground of

certain misconceptions. For example, this doctrine will not admit the proposition of frivolous inquiries. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The Lord will not listen to inquiries that are not burning with sincerity, and that do not relate to the very centre and dignity of life. Nor will this doctrine for one moment tolerate presumptuous inquiries, as to what shall happen on the morrow, or as to who shall live or die ten years hence, or what is the mystery of the universe. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." God will not allow violation of boundaries, trespass of limitations, which are good for us as little children, as lives trained on a cloudy day to aspire after forgiveness and immortality. Nor will the doctrine for one instant tolerate prejudiced inquiries. For example, a man might come saying, that he knows in his heart what he will do, whatever the divine answer may be supposed to be. A man so coming will be disappointed; his inquiry will be regarded as an impiety and will be disallowed. How difficult it is to get rid of prejudice in our inquiries, and even in our prayers! We pray for certain events, but we spoil our prayer by a bias; we want them, but not for the right reason; we suggest certain possibilities to the Lord, but he knows by the reading of our heart that we do not want those possibilities to transpire, but that we are really craving for another set of possibilities and facts. To no such inquiries will the Lord respond. Nor will he answer those who turn evident duties into moral perplexities and spiritual problems. When things are plainly revealed there is no need to pray about them or to inquire concerning them. No man need pray saying, Lord, send me an answer to this inquiry: shall I pay my debts? shall I forgive my penitent enemies? shall I continue in Christian worship and spiritual aspiration? shall I really love my neighbour as myself?—questions that have no real point, no sacrifice in the heart of them, no Calvary at any point of their statement. Thus we lay down limitations, and within those limitations I do not hesitate to propound the doctrine that to an honest and true heart there should be no difficulty whatever in ascertaining the right course, in business, in enterprise, or in any practical department of life. If you have

the childlike, sincere, loving heart, you can have an answer to-morrow as to whether you should take up that venture or not: but if you want to take up the venture, and then make a mock of prayer for heavenly guidance, you will have no reply, or God will make a fool of you. "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." What is your heart? Is it childlike, obedient, docile, without a thought, a prejudice, a bias? Then you can have an answer direct from heaven as to whether you ought to take up that new business, enter into that new enterprise, accept that glittering offer. When the Church lays down this doctrine, and lives it, the Church will have a distinct function in society; but at present the Church is in danger of having nothing to do but repeat its old ceremonies, its old dogmas, its old propositions, every pulse of life having gone out of them, and nothing being left but a dead form of dead words. All men cannot, it may be, attain this supremacy of faith. But the men who have attained it should be the ministers and the prophets of their age. Men should hasten to them for guidance and direction: but they should come in a spirit of docility and faith. Men who can ask God for us are the greatest ministers of the time: no honour too great for them, no tribute too costly. We pay musicians for music, and chaplains for prayers, and preachers for sermons: what should be given to the man who can guide us in the practical affairs of life?

How will the answer come? I cannot tell. What will be the process through which the divine being will communicate with the suppliant soul? I do not know. By mental impressions, by a series of events following each other in a certain order, by uncalculated and unconscious coincidences, by some definite physical action, or in some way that cannot be mistaken for a merely human sensation or event. The answer will be according to the sincerity of the inquirer. Bad faith on the part of the inquirer will receive nothing of the Lord. The Lord will even deceive the prophet himself, and will lead the foolish or selfish inquirer astray. "I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing,

I the Lord have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel." And the prophet himself may have his security endangered by the wickedness of the wicked applicant. I have never hesitated to act upon this doctrine in my own life, and it has never led me astray. I have risked everything upon it. To the sight of men I have in one or two instances or more played the fool that I might magnify faith in God. The answer may not always justify itself by immediate results: God takes time for the declaration of his economies and inspirations. I have sat down the day after committing myself thus to God, and cried like a disappointed child, and have said aloud, Surely in this case my faith has been misplaced, or God has trifled with me. But in another day, or month, or year, a vision has glorified the whole heaven, and all doubt has been dispersed, and they who mocked me as a foolish man have come round to offer their tribute too late, and have even then sought to magnify a man's sagacity above the inspiration of God. Do you feel that you cannot rise to this elevation of faith? Then do not attempt it. Does some tempter say to you, "after all—" Then you are in the tempter's hands, and do not contract the guilt of venturing to speak to spiritual men on spiritual subjects. You have no right to use such language; it is a currency unknown in your world.

Might not false prophets arise? Certainly. What then? If you cannot keep false prophets down, do what you may; you may lay down the doctrine. You fear there will be men who will scoff at it, or misappropriate it, or pervert it, or degrade it? Here is a man who has given up all commercial life because he once knew an individual who attempted to pass a bad half-crown: how noble he looks, how lofty in reason! He had his ground for retiring from the world; nothing we may say can persuade him to return to commercial usages. Here is another man who has given up all friendship and all society because he once proved a man to be a hypocrite. Now he never speaks—now he simply waits for extinction. If he thinks, it is after this fashion, namely: Friendship may beget hypocrisy; men may presume upon it, men may misuse it, may degrade it into selfish and mischievous perversions: therefore I have ceased to have anything to do

with the culture of friendly relations. Here is a noble soul who has retired to a hermitage unknown to every human being because he found self-seekers in politics. He could not bear it—he has gone! We must not therefore be afraid of a doctrine simply because false prophets would arise to trade upon it, because the element of betting, and gambling, and speculation might be introduced into it. What we are in search of is sound, true, spiritual doctrine.

If the Lord Jesus Christ has not taught some such doctrine as we are now attempting to state, he has taught nothing. Therefore I see no scriptural argument against faith-healing. I have never seen any healing by faith, but to my knowledge there is not a single verse in all the Bible which forbids that the prayer of faith will heal the sick. Let us admit that. I do not see any scriptural argument against the possibility of mind communicating with mind, spirit holding sacred relations with spirit: are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? The angel of the Lord encompasseth round about them that love him. Surely there are more passages of Scripture that would seem to indicate the possibility of spiritual communion than would seem to disallow that possibility. I see no scriptural argument against personal inspiration. God surely does not live backwardly, going from much to less, and from less to nothing. The other course of revelation and providence would seem to be more in harmony with what we know of human consciousness, and human history, and divine revelation. The Spirit of God was promised to the Church, and was promised for the express purpose of leading the Church into all truth; men were told not to think about what they should say when they were brought before human tribunals for faith's sake,—as if the Lord had said, You will not be convicted or condemned on the ground of cleverness, or on account of faculty, intellectual inventiveness or personal eloquence. All these things have nothing to do with the case; in the hour of your agony you shall have an answer which cannot be finally gainsaid. This is the upper life; this is the life of faith. I see greater danger in the discouragement of faith than in its stimulus and even exaggeration. Do not

imagine that we escape all danger by disallowing the possibility of communing with God, in the sense of receiving from above direct answers to direct inquiries. Do not suppose that we live a noble life by saying to young and ardent hearts: Do not expect answers from God of a direct and pertinent kind, but construe events, look at the outlines of Providence as they are indicated in the history of the current day. There is a danger in all such discouragement of faith, more danger than in the doctrine which says, Increase your faith; distrust your senses; be sure that your reason cannot comprehend the whole economy and meaning of things. But may not that end in fanaticism? Certainly. Still, what does that prove? If it prove anything it proves too much, and by proving too much it proves nothing. I contend that the sound reason points to the culture of faith, and encourages that marvellous plunge which a man takes when he says, My reason can do no more for me, my senses cannot go one stride further: now, my God, I leap! Take me: leave me not, O thou great Jehovah! To the world that is insanity, but the world never understood faith.

Let no man imagine that this gift is dissociated from obedience. It is not a solitary gift, it is not an eccentricity, it is not given to one man and withheld from another by any merely arbitrary arrangement or purpose. There is a distribution of functions and gifts in the Church; Christ gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. You do not find all these specialities consummated and expressed in one ministry. To one man Christ gave the keys. The man who really holds this trust will be most modest, most faithful, most consciously dependent upon God. The high office to which this doctrine points is, let us repeat, not open to gamblers, speculators, curiosity-mongers, and fortune-tellers. The argument that such people would abuse it, let us further repeat, proves nothing by proving too much: for what holy office or sacred trust have not such people abused? They have prostituted every natural instinct, they have broken every honourable compact,—nay, they have sacrificed their children unto devils. Not for fear of them, therefore, must Christians either lower their flag or shade their light.

Chapter xviii. 24.

"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God."

THE DANGER OF RICHES.

IS it easy then for poor people to enter into the kingdom of God? Jesus Christ does not say so. It is always difficult to enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is not entered by wealth, nor is it entered by poverty; for wealth and poverty are incidental and external circumstances. Let us fix our attention upon the fact that this was probably the first rich applicant at the door of the kingdom of Christ. There have been many since; familiarity may have made some processes in their external relations easy enough: but this young man was in all probability the first rich applicant. Did he think he would add something to what he already had? Was the kingdom of God, or, as he termed it, eternal life, a kind of annexe to the property which he already had? and did he suppose that he might on the whole as well have eternal life as not? it would cost nothing, it would entail no heavy responsibility; it might invest the young man himself with the dignity of novel thought and speculative enterprise, and give a kind of sparkling accent to his general situation. We cannot enter into the reasoning of the young man's mind; we should be foolish to condemn the young man: Jesus Christ loved him, was struck either by his personal beauty, or by his modesty, or by something bewitching in his geniality; he looked upon him as the young man had never been looked upon before, and loved him. If he could have saved him he would; if he could have made the gate of the kingdom a little wider he would: but the kingdom has its laws. Jesus Christ represented those laws, obeyed them, and insisted upon them, and therefore the comeliest young man of to-day would not be allowed to take in with him all his burden.

It was a critical moment for Jesus Christ himself. He had to set precedents in his own Church, he had to create examples by which all succeeding Christian ages and Christian institutions should regulate their policy. Was it no temptation to the Lord? Was it no temptation to attach a millionaire to the cause that elicited social contempt? Might not one rich man act as a decoy and bring a thousand other rich men, and so might not a fashion be created? There can be no fashion in crucifixion. Calvary can never be popular. The Cross can never be a custom of the day. That is the spirit of Christianity, these are the conditions upon which alone eternal life can be realised; we do not enter by money, by wit, by genius, learning, pedigree, or aught that is incidental and external: only by way of the Cross do men pass into the kingdom. The disciples were troubled; they thought that an opportunity had been lost; they started the proposition that if this were to be the policy of the Master, salvation was simply impossible. How could the kingdom get on without such people as this young man? "Who, then, can be saved?"

But Jesus Christ explained the whole occasion by saying, "them that trust in riches." There is no harm in riches themselves, they may be instruments of the greatest possible good, in right hands they are well administered, and the world is better for a Christian administration of wealth. The Lord is not abusing riches or condemning riches; he is pointing out that men may trust in riches, men may idolise their own wealth, their own possessions, and may be unwilling to take the step between the material and the spiritual. He did not say it was impossible, he said it was "hard." There was a touch of agony in the process; there was a conscious wrench in making the change—Ye must be born again—and admission into the greater kingdoms, all morning and all summer as they are, must be an admission through the gate of pain. Jesus Christ often calls us to do the impossible that he may stimulate us to do the difficult. Christianity is the great impossibility of the world. In all its higher ranges it is not within our reach; but its loftiness is an encouragement to those who otherwise would succumb to difficulty, and yield the field to the enemy. Jesus Christ calls us to climb the clouds in the air that he may tempt us a little way up the solid hill.

Christianity will never be easy; it can never be thrown in with something else; it is not a supplement, it is the integral and dominating quantity. There are those who wear their Christianity as they wear their garments newly bought and much valued for the moment: but Christianity is not to be worn, it is a robe of the heart, it is the clothing of the soul. Hence Jesus Christ calls us to do things that mortal man cannot do, in order that we may be stirred to nobler aspiration and purpose. No man, being smitten on the one cheek, can turn the other also; yet we could not do without that impossibility in the divine vocation. It makes our best endeavours look poor; it humbles our virtue into prayer. The spirit, not the letter, reaches the discipline of Christ in the soul.

Nor must we think of riches as referring to mere money. There are riches of many kinds—centres of pride, centres of vanity, centres of self-trust and idolatry, and the whole fabric must be shaken to its base, and torn up by its foundations before Christ can begin to build. There are those who are proud of things they have no concern in. You remember the titled lady, whose name we have ungratefully forgotten, who called upon a distinguished artist, and on being shown into a drawing-room was perfectly wonderstruck. When the painter appeared the lady said, "I am seeking Thrift, the painter." "Well," said the gentleman, "that is my name." And looking round at the beauty of the place, she said, "Is this your house?" "Yes," he said. She thought a painter lived in a garret, and had a portmanteau for a wardrobe and a three-cornered cupboard for a larder. A painter with all these nick-nacks and curios and little touches of refinement about him—what right had a painter to such environment?—as if a painter were not a greater man than a king that sits upon a throne he never worked for and never deserved! People are very fond of talking about the aristocracy of the body: they never know that there is a spiritual aristocracy, that many a man who has no money and no title and no pedigree that can be written down in plain ink, is related to Aristotle, and traces his progeny beyond the Plantagenets even to the great thinkers that have ruled the world by the energy and splendour of their genius. All this rubbish must be cleared out of the way

before spirit can rule, and genius be invested with its divinest influence.

Notice the deceitfulness of all kinds of riches. Riches may corrupt the very simplest of you—take care! How many men have we seen go to the gallows and hang themselves just through the deceitfulness of riches! How delightful it would be to trace the life of many a man and see how he died in the bank—that great mortuary. The man began simply, and was a right genial soul; he brought with him morning light and fresh air wherever he came, and as to cases of poverty his hand knew the way to his pocket so well that he could find that pocket in the dark; as for religious services he was there before the door was open; he never thought the Sabbath too long, he loved the sanctuary, and was impatient to be there; he even went to the week evening service, but then he was only a working man, and only working men should go out in the night air—what does it matter about a few working men being killed off by the east wind! The man whose course we are tracing doubled his income and multiplied it by five, and then doubled it again, and then found that he must give up the prayer meeting. Certainly! Then he proceeded to double his income again, and then he gave up the Sunday service—there was a draught near where he sat, or there was some person in the third pew from his, the appearance of whom he could not bear. How dainty my lord is becoming! Oh, what a nostril he has for evil savours! He will leave altogether presently. He will not abruptly leave: he will simply not come back again, which really amounts to the same thing. He will attend in the morning, and congratulate the poor miserable preacher on the brevity of the service. Did he mean to do this when he began to get a little wealthier? Not he. Is he the same man he used to be? No. Is he nearer Christ? He is universes away from the Cross. He is killed by wealth, trusted in, misunderstood, misapplied. It is not the wealth that has ruined him, but his misconception of the possible uses of wealth; he might have been a leader of the Church.

How is it that Jesus Christ does not attract more poor people to his Church? Because the Church has ceased in some degree

to be Jesus Christ's at all. Jesus Christ is as fond of the weak and the poor and the blind and the halt as he ever was; he is just as tender and beneficent to lepers as he ever was in his earthly ministry; but we have changed the whole situation: now the masses go to the socialists, and the classes go to scientists, and they can treat them better than we can do. The Church has lost its Lord. They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. But was not Jesus Christ crucified in the days of his flesh? Yes, and he would be crucified if he came back again; the first thing we should do with the Christ of God would be to stone him and then to slay him. It must be so: this is the necessary treatment of the infinite by the finite, the pure by the impure, the ineffably holy by the unspeakably corrupt. There are those who in the midst of the greatest splendour remember the days of their poverty. Blessed be God for such men, so sweet of soul, so unpresumptuous, so ready to help. The more wealth they have the better am I pleased, because the better is the world, the better is the Church provided for. "I want," said the late Emperor of Germany, the last but one, the great William, "I want a lamp such as so-and-so has"—naming some distinguished member of the court. A lamp was provided according to the very pattern, but his majesty complained on returning to his study after withdrawment that he could not bear the savour of the room, the lamp was emitting smoke, and it was altogether intolerable. One of the secondary servants knew the reason, but dare not name it to his majesty; one of the higher servants learned the cause and brought it under his majesty's attention—"It is because your majesty turns down the light when you leave the study, that occasions the emission of smoke and vapour, and if you will cease to do that, all will be well." "Ah," said the good old patriot of his nation, "I know how that is; I learned that in the days of our poverty: after the battle of Jena we were very poor, and my mother never allowed us to leave a room at night without turning down the light, and I continue to turn down the light in memory of my mother." A beautiful economy! a tender domestic story that! Here is a man who could have had a thousand lamps, and yet in memory of the days of his poverty, when his mother taught him the uses of money, he kept turning down the light, saying, "Sacred to the

memory of my mother." There are men to-day who are practically doing the same thing:—In memory of the days when we struggled, here is our gift; in memory of the time when we had nothing but hard work to do, here is a token of goodwill to those who are carrying heavy burdens up steep hills. The Lord multiply your wealth a thousandfold; you are the trustees of God, you are the stewards of heaven.

With regard to the whole surrounding of the Church, we should lose heart altogether if we did not hold on to Christ himself. We must come back to the living Lord. If any man were to ask me, as I have recently been asked, to discuss the present position and action of Christianity, I should decline to debate because the man would silence me; I should have no answer to his poignant eloquence. If I endeavoured as a special pleader to make a show on the other side, my own soul would blush for shame whilst I heard my own hollow words and pleas. Because Christianity is now ecclesiasticised, it is an ecclesiastical institution, and I will not defend it. Because Christianity is now a formulated creed, the separate clauses of which are all duly and arithmetically enumerated; and the clauses run into tens and twenties, and only trained intellects and self-deceived metaphysicians can even begin to understand the unintelligible farrago. Because Christianity is now turned to the uses of selfishness I will not defend it. I have challenges from men of various grades, and I decline them one and all, because the challenges are all directed to a vindication of ecclesiasticisms, credal formularies, controversial dogmas, and I renounce them all. If any man will discuss with me the Christ of God, his personality, his claims, his propositions, his life, his priesthood, the Lord that has delivered me all my lifetime will deliver me from any assailant who would lay violent hands on the Son of God; there I will debate and contend vehemently and zealously, because I know the Saviour Christ to be the one Saviour of the world, the one Saviour of my sinning soul—"His blood can make the foulest clean, his blood availed for me." Ecclesiasticisms, institutions based upon narrow conceptions, controversial propositions, man-made creeds, are all doomed. Blessed be God! I will be present if I can when a great bonfire is made of the whole of them, and if anybody wants any quarter

of that great pile lighted I shall be willing to lend both hands on the occasion. You can burn down everything but the Cross. That cannot be burned: it is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever: grim, bleak, bare symbol of agony, type of suffering, consummation of woe. And yet it is breaking out like a tree in the springtime, there are little glints of green, forthputtings of power. There is every assurance that the Cross will be the tree of life, the most beautiful tree in the gardens of the universe, every leaf designed to heal the wounds of the heart.

You cannot bring your riches with you into the kingdom, if you are going to trust in them: if you are going to offer them to Christ and sanctify them to his use, bring them all. You cannot bring your intellectual pride with you: if you are going to consecrate your intellect to the study of the profoundest mysteries, if you are going to cultivate a childlike spirit, if the greater the genius the greater the modesty, bring it all. You can bring with you nothing of the nature of patronage to Christ. It is because he has so little he has so much: because he is so weak he is so strong. You cannot compliment him: he lies beyond the range of eulogy: we reach him by his own way of sacrifice, self-immolation, transformation,—a great mystery outside of words and all their crafty uses, but a blessed conscious spiritual experience. Blessed are those to whom that experience is a reality.

Chapter xviii. 36.

"He asked what it meant."

INQUIRY INTO MEANINGS.

THE speaker was a blind man. He sat by the wayside begging. Though he was a blind man, he had the use of other faculties. Let us be just to facts, and cognisant of the law of compensation. "Hearing a multitude pass by"—then he was not deaf. To be deaf is worst of all. There is nothing to compare with deafness. So the Bible says in all its analogies and teachings. The deaf heart, the deaf soul, the deaf devil,—these are given as instances of the horribleness of deafness. This man was not deaf, he heard the multitude pass by. "And he cried, saying"—then he was not dumb. If we really search into the case of men who are marked by some special disadvantage or infirmity, how many instances of alleviation shall we find! Yet these go for nothing in the fluency of our description. We make much of this man being blind; we say nothing of the fact that he was neither deaf nor dumb; that he had an obstinate and determined will of his own; and that all the multitude passing by could not stifle his prayer. We forget much.

"He asked what it meant." We can at least do this. In asking a question we begin a hopeful experience. The difficulty Christianity has to contend with is that people do not sufficiently ask what it means; they let the procession of miracles pass on and do not say, What is the significance of all that is proceeding round about us? We are bound to ask what these things mean. No man can be just to his own intelligence who does not interrogate the history of Christianity, and insist upon definite replies. Men can live without intelligence, they can elect to be ignoramuses, they can go a step further down and be absolute fools; but no man can be just to his intelligence who does not ask what Christianity means? Christians in their turn are bound

to ask what Buddhism means, what Mohammedanism means, what idolatry means; Christians ought to study the philosophy of history, and to know everything that can be known within the region of fact. Here is a marvellous thing, that one name should have become uppermost, a ruling dominant name, that the centuries cannot put down—nay, that the centuries lift to a higher elevation age after age. Here is a name, a person, an actor on the stage of history, confessedly unrivalled in his influence and power, exercising a wondrous charm: what does it mean? However he came into the world, he is in it, and he is the most conspicuous fact in all its history. Say he came in by the historical gate—how did he get in? Why have not others come in of equal magnitude and quality? Why should there be only one man? why should he be peerless? Say he came in by the dream gate. Still, here he is; if he was dreamed, he is, if possible, more wonderful than he is in his historical relations. Here is a dream that has fascinated the ages, overturned thrones, established dynasties, ruled policies, made thrones bow down in homage. Who dreamed this dream? What is his name? Did he ever dream again? These inquiries enable us to reassert the statement that no man can be just to his own intelligence who does not seriously ask and faithfully pursue the inquiry, What does this thing mean? Here is a name that has tamed tigers and made them gentle as lambs; here is a power that has turned the poor man's little house into a gate opening towards heaven; here is a power that has liberated slaves, sustained the cause of the poor and needy, never been silent in the face of oppression. What does it mean? How did it get amongst the agencies that constitute human history? Tell us about it. When men ask questions like these they begin, let us repeat, a hopeful experience. Great questions will always elicit great replies.

There is another side to this circumstance. When any man asks what it means, there should be some other man standing close to him who can answer. That may be a serious deficiency in the Church,—qualified men, persons who can speak with the authority of experience, and not with the authority of office, people who can definitely say, We will tell you what he has

done for us, and what he has done for us he will do for you, he loves to do it; come nearer to us, and we will tell you all the story of wisdom and love as we ourselves have been enabled to receive and understand it. That is the function of the Church. The Church has a great teaching ministry to discharge. Do we cultivate and encourage the spirit of inquiry. Do we so deport ourselves that men feel they may venture to ask us serious questions? It is well that the Church should wear its robe of humility and speak of its ignorance. But the Church ought, on the other hand, to have some definite message to deliver, the Church ought to be able to answer certain great questions. It will be no sign of pride, but a distinct proof of faithfulness, when the Church says, Whatever I can tell you I am willing to communicate. Nor should the Church be dumb until she can be eloquent. There is a halting-place between silence and noblest utterance: there is the point of serious attempt; there is the point of being willing to say how much divine wisdom has been acquired: and so wondrous is the law of spiritual communication that when we begin to speak we begin to find somewhat to say, if so be we are inspired by the spirit of earnestness, and are deeply solicitous about the eternal welfare of the people who have asked us questions. It will be vain, and even worse than vain, it will be simple and most culpable hypocrisy, to say that we will not tell what we do know until we know more. What should we say of a man who refused to give bread to the hungry until he has multiplied his own loaves by a hundred? Give what you have; start where you can; speak the one little sentence that is addressed to you in all your presently-acquired treasures of the kingdom of heaven. We want a communicative Church as well as a communicative ministry. Inquiries are handed on to the minister. That might be right if the inquirers wanted to know something technical, recondite, pedantic, if they wanted a literary schoolmaster, a veritable pedagogue; but they want encouragement, sympathy, and they will feel that sympathy all the more tenderly if spoken to them on an obvious level which is not unattainable by themselves. All this reference to ministers for answers to questions is superstitious, popish, and infinitely mischievous; in the Christian kingdom every man is a priest, a minister, a teacher sent from God.

Those who are able to answer should not be content to rebuke inquirers. We read in this connection, "And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace." We are not to encourage the spirit of rebuke. We cannot impoverish Christ, therefore we need not rebuke appellants and suppliants; they can appeal and supplicate and cry and desire, and the more he gives the more he will have remaining in his power. The Church has always been delighted to rebuke men. The more highly organised the church the more has it been characterised by the rebukeful spirit. A highly organised church—be it Popish, Episcopalian, or Congregational—always means authority, dictation, standard of orthodoxy, repulsion by authority. All this need not be put down by force, because all time, all progress, all spiritual ministries are on the other side. The rebukeful spirit must go down, and the spirit of sympathy must take its place, and exercise a blessed function in reference to the education and progress of mankind. The Church—by which I mean any highly organised and elaborated Church—has always stood in the way of progress, has been the mother of superstition, has been the occasion of infinite mischief. The whole history of progress has run away from the lines of the Church. When we say the lines of the Church we take liberties with imagination, for the Church has no lines. In speaking thus of the Church we are not speaking of any particular church, but of the organisation which for the time being represents the supreme spiritual authority of the day, by what name soever it may be described and defined.

There was a time when it was pronounced a heresy to declare the existence of the Antipodes. To us this is incredible, but we must not throw away the history of our own race. There was a time when a man could have been imprisoned for declaring that the earth moved. A great monk arose in Alexandria, by name Cosmas, who was charged as it were by the Church to refute the awful and soul-destroying doctrine of the Antipodes. He devoted the remainder of a long and laborious lifetime to the refutation of the heresy. The result of his thought and labour was that he declared the earth to be a parallelogram, whose length is twice its breadth, that the sky is glued round its sides, and the sun and moon and stars are the decoration of its firmament; and to say

anything contrary to this was to be anti-Christian, to be in a distressing spiritual condition. If a man arose to say anything to the contrary he was rebuked, that he should hold his peace. Now men go to the Antipodes as a matter of course. Cosmas said the Bible speaks of "the face of the whole earth"; so how can it have anything on the other side of it? He was a literalist, and the letter-mongers have nearly ruined the whole cause of Christianity, and would have done so if it had not been divine. That Christianity has survived the patronage of its friends is the culminating proof of the divinity of its origin. We must therefore beware of this spirit of rebuke, inasmuch as we have history to guide us in reference to its action. When men arose to declare on the evidence of geology that death was known hundreds and thousands of ages ago, the Church rebuked them, that they should hold their peace. Now every child knows that death has been in the world from the beginning, that the cemetery is the oldest of its institutions, or may at least rank amid the most venerable of its antiquities. Poor Church, authoritative empurpled Church! holding a sceptre of its own cutting and its own gilding, which has always been shouldered out of the way by men, for whom God be praised. Hence our great object should be to shatter all great organisations of a spiritual kind; all poperies and hierarchies and man-made mechanisms, and to simplify Christian relations to the utmost, and cultivate a spirit of reverent freedom, so that every man shall tell every other man, as opportunity may arise, what he has heard in his own tongue concerning the wonderful works of God. The disciples would seem to speak with authority. Who dare contravene the dictum of a disciple? The blind man dared. If he had not been blind he would not have dared; but conscious need defies the Church. Said the blind man in effect—I am blind, and this man can give me my sight; stand back and let me speak to him for myself. This is the individuality we ought to encourage—no prayer by proxy, no choking of supplication by official authority, but each heart, conscious of its own need, coming to Christ to tell its own tale.

When men get the right answer they should offer the right petition. When the blind man was told that Jesus of Nazareth

passeth by he got the right answer, and having got it, he offered the right petition: "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." This is the point we must all begin at. This is evidently true. We could not amend the terms, we could add nothing to the dignity of the spirit, we could increase by no instalment or increment how small soever the dignity of this man's position—have mercy! The reason we have not received answers to many prayers is that we did not begin at the beginning. Many persons begin their prayers at the wrong end; they do not take up the sequence of things. There is no logic in the progression of their sentiments and desires: we must begin by crying for mercy. The publican said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The suppliant came to him saying, "Lord, have mercy upon my child." Whoever begins there begins at the only right point. We do not come to discuss questions of law and righteousness, of ordinance and institute, of sovereignty and destiny with God, we come to ask for mercy; having obtained mercy, we advance, we grow, and our prayers enlarge, until they become reverently familiar communions with God, long fellowships, talks that take up all the sunlight, and that Christ himself must needs conclude by coming into the house and breaking for us our bread. Are there any who are standing outside, saying that they have many questions to ask Jesus Christ before they will ask him to heal them? He will not answer; he has no time; earnestness cannot dally; the king's business requireth haste. You could retain him for ages in your own house if your earnestness could last so long; he will never go so long as your simplicity and sincerity have any question to ask: but to discuss with us on equal terms, to make Christianity a kind of schoolmaster revelation, he will never consent,—it is a flash of light, it is a dawning day, it is a spirit whispering in the soul, an infinite subtlety operating upon every point of life, and working a miracle without name or limit.

Having got the right answer, men should adopt the right course. What did the blind man do? "And immediately he received his sight, and followed him." There are many who have received sight, and have gone the other road. "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that

returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." Ingratitude is easily learned; if it is a fine art we seem in many instances to be to the manner born. We have received all that men could give us, and have rewarded them with tepid applause or discriminating criticism: enthusiasm, devotion, avowal of indebtedness, who can find? Yet when found how precious are they, how they multiply life and increase influence, and establish the teacher in a kind of natural and holy authority. Who will be the last man to leave that travelling Christ? The man whose sight was restored. He will get to the front presently. He has not received his eyesight that he might not make use of it. This man intends to be on the front line presently. We have seen what force he had in blindness—his energy has not been destroyed by his restoration. Do we not make mistakes regarding Christian influence in this way? A man is converted, and henceforth we hear nothing more about him. That would not be conversion, that would be extinction. A man has been a great singer in the tavern, in the saloon, in the family circle; his voice has been praised for richness and sweetness of tone: he has been converted, and now he sits in the church, and no one ever hears his voice. That is not conversion, that is annihilation. The man who was blessed with restored sight was a man who put the church down when he wanted his eyesight, and he will put down any church that wants to keep him from his right place. What we want is not so much further instruction but simple gratitude. We do not go too far in our statement in saying that gratitude will outlast all mere information, all external training, and will be heard at the very end glorifying God. How can a man go from Christ who has received his sight? This would seem to be absolutely impossible. Other men may go who have only received external gifts, such as bread for passing hunger, water because of immediate thirst; these things may be forgotten: but restored sight! why, every star that glittered, every flower that bloomed, every bird that flew in the air would be a rebuke and a reproach if such a man turned away from Christ—yea, he could not have seen the way to go but for the very sight which he received from the Son of God. Let us take care how we turn our Christian instruction to immoral uses. Let us beware, we who learned to read in the Sunday School, lest we turn our power

of reading to the service of the devil. Christianity found us when no other agency cared about our life; elicited our interest, fascinated our imagination, evoked our confidence, and made us men. The question now is, Shall we, having been thus discovered, re-created, inspired,—shall we turn our back upon our Creator and Inspirer, and spend the treasures of his benevolence at the counter of the devil?

Blessings bestowed on others should make Christians joyful and grateful. "And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God." This is the spirit of festival. If we were to continue our hymn as long as we could discover any instances of divine interposition, our psalm would never cease. Yet this is precisely what we are called upon to do. The missionary comes into the church in breathless haste and says an island has been purged of its idolatry, a house of prayer has been set up there, and the people are eagerly flocking into it, and are crying mightily for light and love from heaven. Such a speech ought to fire the enthusiasm of the mother country from whose shores the missionary went forth. To-day they are but an insignificant minority who care anything as to what any missionary may declare. You can empty almost any church by putting a missionary in the pulpit to tell his tale of Christian triumph. When we hear of benevolent institutions being founded, we should sing another hymn of praise; when we hear that any one solitary heart has been made glad by news from heaven, we should join the festival and increase the gratitude. We are involved in other engagements; we care for spectacles, demonstrations, great occasions: unhappily, we seldom care for the right thing. That a king is to be executed would excite all the civilised nations of the globe: that a man has been converted would excite the suspicion of the few people who cared anything concerning it. We are living upside down. We are availing ourselves of false standards and estimates of things. When the world is in the right course the things that are now highly esteemed will be of no repute, and when a little child begins to sing its first Christian hymn with the intelligence of tears the whole church will pray with holy joy.

Blind men should avail themselves of all the light they can

secure. But of what use is light to a blind man? None. But the question does not end with the blind man. We have read of a man who was travelling on a dark night, carrying a brightly shining lantern; we have read of some one meeting him, looking him in the face, and discovering that he was blind; we have further read of him inquiring of the man who carried the lantern, "Are you not blind?" and receiving an affirmative answer. "Why, then," said the astounded inquirer, "do you carry a lantern?" Said the blind man, "To prevent other people stumbling over me." A philosopher that as well as a blind man. He was protecting himself by carrying a light. As he could not see others coming, and others might not take heed of his blindness, there might be collision and loss; so the blind man carried the lantern. So it may be in many of our moral and spiritual relations. We should show what we are even if we are blind. We might prevent other people injuring us and injuring themselves by declaring in some way our blindness. The mischief is that some men who are blind declare that they see, and having declared that they are in the possession of sight they incur responsibility. If they had not said "We see," their sin would not have remained: "but," said Christ, "now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." God judges by facts, by limitations; he takes all things into account, and his mercy endureth for ever.

Chapter xix. 1—10.

"And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

JESUS CHRIST AND ZACCHÆUS.

YOU may build God out of cities, or you may throw open the city gates and bid him welcome with all reverence and thankfulness. You cannot build him out with common masonry. He can crumble our rocky walls to pieces, and drive the ploughshare through the foundations of our fortresses; he can touch the mountains, and they will go up before him as the smoke of incense; wherever mere power is required, God can break us down by a stroke. How then, you will say, is it possible to build God out of the city? I answer, by corrupt institutions, by depraved laws, by tricks of trade, by knavery and fraud, by selfish dispositions and oppressive usages, by forgery, by unjust balances, by defective measures, by practical lying, by false-heartedness, it is possible to build God out of a city more thoroughly than he could be excluded by the most elaborate masonry. Ancient Jericho attempted to enclose herself within solid walls, but men appointed by God threw down all her boasted defences. Can anything resist the thunder of the march which is commanded by God? When men walk according to

the divine order, when they step in harmony with the rhythm of the divine movement, they overturn the rocks, and cast the mountains into the sea. Yet, alas! there is a region in which Omnipotence itself is weakness: even a child can shut the door of its heart against God, and Almightiness may be defied by an evil will! Jericho was favoured of God in exceeding measure—bountifully supplied with water, having a tropical climate, her palm trees equalling the palms of Egypt, rich with fruits, spices, and perfumes, growing in abundance the sweet-smelling camphire and the balm of Gilead; yet, while the beasts of the field, the dragons and the owls honoured the Most High, she departed from her Maker, and praised not the goodness of her Lord. She trusted in her walls, and confided in the strength of her arm, until God smote her by the breath of his mouth! Gladly do we come to the words before us, as marking a new era in the annals of Jericho. And Jesus is passing through our own city to-day; and, busy as we are with the claims of daily life, we may see his beauty and learn his will.

"And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich" (ver. 2).

A whole paragraph devoted to the delineation of one man's life, whilst so many great subjects are hardly touched upon in the Christian Scriptures. Yet let us not complain of what looks to us like the capriciousness and incompleteness of divine revelation, for in these portrayals of individuals, we have not only the most practical aspects of the Christian faith, but we get nearer to God than would otherwise have been possible. When we see Jesus Christ face to face with an individual sinner, we see the whole scheme of redemption as it were in miniature; and we have the advantage of concentration; our minds are not distracted by the bewilderment which is occasioned by a vast scale of operation; everything is brought to a point; and to us is given the benefit of the conciseness of individuality. Does not one man require in his own experience the whole scheme of divine redemption? Is it not with this as with the light, the atmosphere, and the whole mechanism of the world? Were there but one man upon the globe, he would as much require the sun, the summer, the harvest, as do the millions who now

exist upon it. We shall see God's love perhaps more vividly displayed, because more intensely concentrated, in the case of one man than when applied to the necessities of the whole world. Each man should have a paragraph of Christian history specially his own. Is your life to be found in Christian history? Can you point to any record of a personal interview with the Saviour? Blessed are you whose lives are part of a great unwritten Bible, which is continually before God.

"And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature" (ver. 3).

Let me take out of this verse three words which set forth the highest object of human life; these three words are—"To see Jesus"! Zacchæus sought to see him through natural curiosity, yet such curiosity may be turned to the highest uses; Zacchæus sought only to see the Man, but in the end he saw the Saviour, he desired to see a wonder, and in the end he was made into a wonder himself. So it is evermore,—a man is made either infinitely better or infinitely worse by coming into contact with Jesus Christ; the Gospel kills or makes alive. This man found a difficulty in attempting to realise his wish. Is it not so with some of us who are listening to this story to-day? Zacchæus was little; every man is little somewhere. The signature of defect is upon every character; we cannot write a complete biography of any man without having to use this word little, in one relation or another. Men are truly little when they are little in spiritual force, in moral sympathy and tender-heartedness, in appreciation of objects that are noble, progressive, sublime. Any other littleness is but a trivial defect; this is a mortal blemish. Hear how the descriptive words go in the case of Zacchæus—chief, rich, little! It is possible for a man to read his life in this fashion, and to complain that it has been set on a descending scale; but it is also possible to reverse the order of these epithets, and so to get a more inspiring view of life. He will then say, not chief, rich, little, but little, rich, chief! Take care how you read your life! Some lives may be read thus—little, less, nothing! If we look at those who are higher than ourselves, we may become censorious critics of the divine way; but if we make ourselves familiar with those who are in the

lowest positions of life, suffering pain, hunger, loneliness, we shall abound in grateful praises to the Giver of all good. Did Zacchæus give up his object because of the difficulty of the situation? Let us read:—

"And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way" (ver. 4).

He never would have been chief among the publicans and rich if he had succumbed to difficulties. His character was brought out by opposition. I contend that, whatever a man's disadvantages may be, he can see Jesus Christ if he so determine in his heart. There are men, now-a-days, who profess that they have endeavoured to see Jesus Christ, but have been kept back by the press of sects, sceptics, speculators, critics, commentators, and controversialists; but, in the face of an incident like this, the triviality of such pretence is made evident. I allow that there is a great press of the sort described; no doubt it is, more or less, a difficulty to urge one's way through the throng surrounding Jesus Christ, yet there is a sycomore tree up which we may climb if we are truly in earnest. Zacchæus was little, but he could run; Zacchæus was short of stature, but he could climb. How very shocking—how manifestly improper of one who was chief among the publicans and rich, to be seen running along the road and climbing up a tree! Such enthusiasm in pursuit of his object is in keeping with the whole character of the man. Are you willing, if need be, to go out of the so-called regular way to see the Saviour, or are you sacrificing your destiny to the tyrannous claims of conventionality? Then I exhort you to climb up any tree, to enter any church, from which you can more clearly see the face of the Redeemer. Break up your old associations, cast off your creeds and usages, and incur the censure of established proprieties, rather than not see the Friend of sinners. Incidents like this make me impatient of all the excuses which are urged in explanation of not accepting the salvation of Jesus Christ. Can we not do as Zacchæus did? What is the value of our earnestness, if it does not enable us to overcome difficulties? No excuse should detain us, except such as we can tell Jesus Christ himself. Remember that it is written, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way." The Saviour him-

self acknowledges the difficulty, yet he never says it is insurmountable, and never promises that it shall protect men from the consequences of unbelief. Oh, ye men who are exhausting yourselves in the pursuit of riches; ye who rise early and retire late, that you may increase your worldly substance; you that are prepared to make any sacrifice of strength and time, that you may compete successfully in the strife of scholarship; you that are prepared to encounter every form of suffering and incur any danger, that you may extend your knowledge of the world and your influence among men as legislators and economists, say not that you have been driven back from seeking Jesus Christ by some petty inconvenience or contemptible barrier! Sobriety is undoubtedly the snare of some men; they must needs take their first considerations from what is called prudence; and whilst they are deliberating whether it be proper to adopt some extraordinary method of attaining their object, the Saviour passes by without being seen. Better run the risk which comes of the intoxication of enthusiasm, than be rendered powerless by a benumbing conventionality. Zacchæus would never have been the man that he was, had he been incapable of enthusiasm; he would have succumbed to propriety, where he overcame by a noble passion.

"And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house" (ver. 5).

Observe the development which is traced in this verse. Jesus Christ looked, saw, and said. It is possible to look without seeing; many men can look upon the throngs of the world without emotion; human history has to them no deep significance; in their eyes men are but customers, clients, patrons; the idea of immortality never mingles with their coarse thinking. On the other hand, it is possible both to look and to see; to the highest type of mind, the sight of a crowd brings sadness of heart; every man is seen to be a mystery—to be the bearer of untold sorrow—to be the distracted subject of many ambitions—to be weak through sin, and to be bearing the black seal of death; to such types of mind life becomes one long sigh, by reason of the wickedness which enfeebles and dehumanises the race. It is possible, however, both to look and to see, yet not

to say. There is a want of moral courage, even where there is a deep appreciation of the necessities of the case. Many men will tell you, that when they have been brought into contact with men of extreme depravity, they have just been on the point of preaching the Gospel, yet they have forborne to speak the Word of life. When Christians look, and see, and say, there will go forth into the world such an evangelising commission as never yet sought the recovery of men. Have you ever spoken to one human creature about his personal salvation? You tell me you have looked upon your friend, and that you have seen the deepest want of his life, yet you have not delivered the message of God to his soul. Believe me, this is not friendship, and that there is a day coming on which you will feel that in neglecting these opportunities—you have risked your own salvation. Is it not noticeable, that Jesus Christ addressed Zacchæus by name? To the reverent mind, this circumstance justly suggests the omniscience of the Son of God. Did not the Lord say unto Moses, "I know thee by name"? We, too, are known in our individuality. If we have set ourselves in any position, ordinary or peculiar, for the purpose of seeing the Saviour, the All-seeing Eye is upon us, and our personal name is associated with the act. How did Zacchæus receive the word that was addressed to him? Did he hesitate? Did he excuse himself on the ground that he had been seeking to gratify merely a natural curiosity? Many persons take up positions of observation in the sanctuary, and when they are personally invited to active service on behalf of Jesus Christ, or closer communion with the Church, they instantly plead a merely general interest, and excuse themselves from consenting to the appeal on most trivial grounds. They turn the sanctuary into a convenience; they make use of the vantage-ground without any pledge of loyalty to the claims of Christ, and treat with coldness the invitations which might call their souls in a most fruitful and glorious development. How did Zacchæus act? Let us read:

"And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully" (ver. 6).

This is in striking harmony with all that we have seen of Zacchæus. The man who could run and climb was just the man to make haste in coming down, and to give a joyful answer

to such an appeal. Men would be better if we spoke to them more kindly. Take high ground with a man, and you instantly put him on his own defence; speak to him in a conciliating tone, and you may gain audience of his very heart. Be sure, as Christian teachers, there is something in every man to which you can address yourselves with good effect. We may clearly infer from this text, that the unlikeliest men may yield the most blessed results of our ministry. Here is a man, chief among the publicans and rich, despised and avoided by a large portion of society, who returns a joyful answer to the appeal of Christ. Has it not been so in our own experience? Some of the men on whose adhesion we had reckoned most confidently have fallen back into coldness and unbelief; and some whom we had regarded as hopeless have responded to our ministry with most unexpected and startling joy. We must be more cordial with neglected men. In all congregations there are men little counted of, or even hardly known, lying under the ban of suspicion, or misunderstood by reason of some social disfavour, who only need to be personally addressed in the language of Christian love, to yield themselves with overflowing joy to the gentle demands of the Saviour.

"And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner" (ver. 7).

What a life of criticism Jesus Christ endured! Always reproached, always suspected, often despised, truly had he been less than God, he would have abandoned his ministry in disgust and returned to the world whence he proceeded. The whole of the religion of his day was hostile to his spirit and method, and no man entered into sympathy with his world-embracing schemes; his brethren distrusted him, and his friends fell away from his standard, and he was left to work in loneliness that would have been terrible, but for the divinity that was in him. Even the most despised worker amongst us can have but a faint notion of what it is to live under a fire of continual reproach; to have all one's motives misunderstood, to see our whole purpose resented with contempt, to have one's name made synonymous with that of the devil. Think of what was the condition under which Jesus Christ worked, and let us learn from it patiently to endure the contradiction of sinners.

The relation of Jesus Christ to sinners enforces a lesson which the Church has yet to learn. We shall not severely criticise the Church in the exercise of moral discipline; but we shall ask most earnestly whether the discipline of exclusion should not be followed by the discipline of recovery? It is perfectly right to depose from the honour and privilege of Church standing those who have brought the Church's name into disrepute. Justice to those who have maintained a consistent profession demands this, not to speak of the higher consideration in which Jesus Christ himself is involved; yet, when such deposition has been effected, there should be a most kindly concern on behalf of the Church to recover the excluded. Discipline is not exhausted by the mere act of excision; it is doubtful whether this is not the lowest aspect of discipline. It is easy to thrust out the offender, but not so easy to go after him and to say, that having fulfilled the law of penalty, we have come to attempt the law of restoration. It is to be feared that we have not been filled with God's love towards backsliders; we have not pursued them with our prayers; we have not stood around them in masses to put before their feet every possible impediment in the road to hell. Which of us would dare to go into the house of a publicly known sinner, such as Zacchæus was thought to be, for the purpose of drawing him towards higher life? Our own virtue has often been so feeble, that only by associating with the best men could we escape the reputation of being vicious. Only where there is superabounding spiritual life can there be a graceful descent into the haunts of evil which defies the tongue of scandal, and ignores the murmuring of outraged respectability.

This verse shows very strikingly that the path of duty often lies across the prejudices of society. It is not an easy thing for one man, poor and friendless, to set himself against the current of public opinion. A word of caution is, however, necessary here, for there are self-opinionated men enough, who boast of their singularity, and imagine themselves to be somebody, because they are foolhardy enough to throw out a challenge to the whole world. Singularity, considered strictly in itself, is no virtue. When it is the expression of self-confidence, it is neither more nor less than detestable affectation; when it is the expres-

sion of intelligent and anxious conviction, animated by a profound humility, and dictated by a self-sacrificing desire to do good, it is noble and praiseworthy. Men should not aim at singularity; but, being forced into it by their loyal constancy to Jesus Christ, they should not fear its consequences. Some consciences seem to describe an eccentric orbit, and, in doing so, become whimsical and fantastical in what, from want of a better word, may be called their moral phases. Out of this eccentricity there comes a narrow and censorious criticism, which gives just offence to the most honourable and generous minds. Jesus Christ was never singular merely for the sake of singularity. It was the divinity of his virtue which compelled the loneliness of his life—more earthliness would have meant more popularity.

"And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (ver. 8).

You have seen flowers which have been closed during the night, opening to the morning sun; so is it with human hearts shut up in the cold dark night of selfishness, when the Sun of righteousness arises upon them with healing in his wings. Zacchæus would never have known himself if he had not first known Jesus Christ. It is ever noteworthy that by contact with the Saviour men become greater, and to their fuller strength is added all the charm of generosity. In this case there is a noticeable combination of liberality and justice; the poor and the wronged alike feel the blessed influence of this man's renewal; all with whom he had to do were to be the better for his having received Jesus Christ into his heart. This kind of evidence ought to form the most powerful vindication of Christianity. Renewed men explain God's revelations to the soul. Instead of saying, Examine this or that doctrine, we ought to be able to point to the poor man who is being comforted, and to the wronged man who is being compensated, and to say, These are the claims which we set up in exposition and defence of Christian truth. Let me beseech you to think of Jesus Christ, not only as the Saviour, but as the revealer of men. See how all generous resolutions, all divine aspirations, and all unselfish impulses result from contact with him. In the presence of such evidences of new life, I am constrained to say that no man need hesitate to decide whether

or not he is really under the influence of the Son of God. He has only to put to himself such questions as these: Am I doing my utmost to repair the wrongs of the past? Do I measure everything by a divine standard? Do I make myself the centre of the circle in which I move, or do I refer everything to Jesus Christ as the one Lawgiver and Judge? Am I the friend of the poor? Is my presence as a light of hope in the dark places of oppression and misery? These are the questions that determine the quality of our manhood. We have heard of professing Christians who were narrow in their creed, selfish in their policy, grovelling in their dispositions, and illiberal in their judgments; we have no hesitation in charging upon them the high crime of dishonouring the name that is above every name. It is the glory of Christianity that it ennobles human life. Do you know of any man who has been made less true, less generous, less compassionate, less forbearing, since he identified himself with the cross? My bold and lofty challenge on behalf of Jesus Christ is this, that he meets man dwarfed and crippled by sin, and glorifies him with the dignity, and enriches him with the blessedness, of eternal life. Let men receive the spirit of the Saviour, and every transaction of their lives will be simplified, elevated and made pure, their business will be regenerated, their houses will become sanctuaries, and their whole character a living persuasive defence of all that is wise, and true and good. We do not for one moment deny the heightening and refining effect of intellectual education; but we have seen evidence enough in the history of the world under all conditions of civilisation, to justify the opinion that man's best estate, apart from Jesus Christ, is but as the artificial plant to the living and fruitful garden.

"And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham" (ver. 9).

Have you had such a visitation in your house? Truly, there are special days in our life which seem to throw all other days into insignificance. Chiefest and brightest of them is the day on which salvation becomes the culminating fact of our history. I am afraid that this word salvation is becoming somewhat unfamiliar; nor am I sure that it is always used in its fullest meaning, even by those who are not ashamed of the Gospel of

Christ. It is possible to think of salvation as a distant blessing, but Jesus Christ speaks of it as a present reality. He gives eternal life to men now, and we fall short of the happiest realisation of our privileges, if we allow the heart to dwell upon anything less than the immortality which has been given to us by the Son of God. It may not always be possible to point out the exact day on which salvation came to us; I do not press for the identification of mere dates, but I do contend that it is impossible for Jesus Christ to have been received into any house as Redeemer and King, without his entry having made such an impression as can never be effaced from the memory or dislodged from the liberated and rejoicing heart. It ought not to be a merely sentimental exercise to recall the hour in which we received the blessings of salvation. Men are poor when they give up the great memories of the soul. It is one of the most blessed enjoyments of the Christian life to fall back upon hallowed recollections, and to summon them to our aid in anticipating a future on which there may rest somewhat of the shadow of doubt or fear. Men can say, This day I was ruined in trade; this day I undertook a most important commercial engagement; this day I fell under the power of a terrible disease; this day I came into possession of great riches—blessed are they amongst whose recollections is the transcendent day on which Jesus Christ set up his kingdom in their hearts.

Whilst dwelling upon this verse, it is important to observe the view which Jesus Christ takes of Zacchæus. The multitude had called him "a man who is a sinner"; Jesus Christ openly declared him to be "a son of Abraham."* Little natures delight to take lowering views of human life; it is the delight of great souls to give high interpretation and sublime significance to the capacity and destiny of men. See the mercifulness of the

* "Many ancient and some modern commentators understand this to mean that Zacchæus, whether or not a heathen by birth, now became a 'son of Abraham' in a spiritual sense, by his conversion; but it probably signifies that he was a son of Abraham literally (compare ch. xiii. 16), and had claims and rights by reason of his covenant relation to God, as well as other Jews ('he also'), although a publican. Nevertheless, he was one of 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' whom the Son of man is sent 'to seek and to save' (compare Matt. xviii. 11)."—*The Speaker's Commentary.*

Saviour's judgments! If there is one spark of light in us, he increases it to a great flame; if he can possibly classify with the children of Abraham, he will never identify us with the sons of perdition. It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men.

After this came the last grand word, worthy of being written in letters of fine gold—

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (ver. 10).

Had men not been lost, he never would have come as a man. In what form we might have seen him it is impossible to say. To our sin we owe his incarnation; what if sin shall prove to have brought us views of God which could never have been seen in the light of unfallen virtue? As we see most truly what is in man when Jesus Christ reveals him, may it not also be true, that we see most deeply into the heart of God when he is moved to the condemnation of sin and the redemption of the sinner? It is premature to say what part sin will play in the economy of the universe; we know little about it now; at best, it is but morning twilight; yet, if through the sin we have even now seen so much of the mercy, there may remain still brighter and more inspiring revelations, and hell itself may be made to contribute towards a fuller understanding of the infinite love and glory of God. Turning away from the mystery, let us take heart in presence of an incident so graphic and touching as this; let no sinner despair; let none who would see Jesus give up the noble purpose. He receiveth sinners still; he braves the reproaches of the narrow-minded still; he is mighty to save—he is unwilling to destroy.

Chapter xix. 41.

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it."

THE CLAIMS OF THE CITY.

THE city was Jerusalem; the beholder who looked at it through his tears was Jesus Christ. Our difficulty is that men will not come near the city. They live in it, and do not see it; they have their little accustomed macadamised roads, hardened by the feet of business, but as for what lies behind, just ten feet from their own turnpike, they know nothing. No man knows London. The people who live in it mayhap know less than those who only visit it now and then. The familiar way, the daily swing, the repeated routine: that is not London; that is not the city. It is but so much custom, so much paved road; what was done yesterday, done again to-day, and to be repeated to-morrow, and so on to the end of life's little day. London is behind all that, and below it, and immeasurably beyond it; a city of sorrow, a city of death, a city of health. London is not at church to-day; London is never at church. Respectable London is there; custom is observed, old superstitions are repeated, or ancient reverences are observed with gracious concern and gratitude; but million-headed London is not at church; does not want to go to church; finds nothing at church, but mockery, disappointment, things hung so high up in the air that hunger cannot seize them with the clutch of its eager hand, or the tooth gnaws it like a cruel beast. It was when Jesus Christ came near the city that he wept over it with a heart that could not hold all its sorrow. There are men who dare not go off their own beaten way in the great city; in the smallest number of minutes they might make themselves strangers in their own metropolis: they would not know the faces—faces out of which God has been expunged; they would not know the voices—voices that might once have been made tuneful, musical, but are now instruments of harshness, clamour,

vulgar noise and tumult. Some of us are bound to know a little about the city. We would rather live in a garden; it would be quieter, sweeter, altogether more in accordance with cultivated taste. Some of us would rather live in an art gallery; it would be serener; it would be more favourable to oblivion as regards all things unpleasant. But because we belong to the Cross we belong not to the respectability of society, only to the part of it that is already half-condemned.

The Cross has nothing to do with respectability; it loathes it. If the Cross is not this day and every day going down the city's darkest roads, then the men who professedly bear that Cross have broken every oath that makes life sacred. Go to the poor and see them pay their rent. When will the counting cease? The shillings are but a little handful, and there is one, two, three, four—what for, poor woman? What for? For a floor to sleep on, for space to toil in. Climb high and find in the unfurnished room the sufferer who has no friends—silent, solitary, cursing this world and defying every other, and determined if ever he should see a God to face him as tyrants should be faced, for calling men into such existence that is all pain and no joy. The poor, irrational sufferer no doubt will be spoken about as eccentric, and wild, and lacking in self-control: but a sufferer nevertheless, in every pore of his skin, in every nerve of his curiously complicated body—a body as well made as if it had been the body of a prince, with exactly the same capacities of enjoyment, but capacities that are sealed with the black seal of death. The statistician knows nothing about the city; the politician knows nothing about it, unless he be more than a merely political student. The sick-visitor knows a little about the city; the city missionary goes where many philanthropists would prefer not to go, but would be willing to throw the missionary a guinea that he—he—might work it out, whilst the philanthropist drank his wine and said his unheard prayer. A real sight of the city would convert any man to Christianity—to Christianity as exemplified in the person and ministry of Christ himself. When we speak of Christianity it is not of Christianity as professed by preacher or hearer, but as embodied in the Son of God. When you answer Christianity, please to answer Christ. As for answering us, you

could grind us to powder. We cannot stand before you if ye be righteous men, pressing the claims of morality and honour and truth and benevolence and sincerity; if you pelt us with our inconsistencies we are stoned to death. When you would plead against Christianity make your assault upon the Son of God himself.

How beautiful is this text in every aspect! Take it as a picture: Is there anything finer in art? Take it as a sentiment: is there anything deeper in human pathos? Take it as a revelation of God, and surely to the weeping God even a little child might go. God should be so pictured that little children would run to him. Call him invisible, eternal, immutable, omnipotent, and no one wants to see him: point him out crying over the city, and a child might want to go and catch some of that sacred rain. It is to this Saviour, and to none other, that we are committed. As for speculation about him, away with it; as to this man's theory about him, and that man's contradictory theory concerning him, and some other man's elaborate philosophy about the Son of God, they have injured, hindered, degraded the Cross. The only Christ to whom I have given my poor soul, my little frail, dying life, is yonder Christ, blind with his own tears. Take it as a revelation, a sentiment, a picture; and what can go so far towards inflaming with celestial life and fire the imagination of mankind?

There is some grim encouragement about the spectacle—"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it." Then even he had his disappointments in life. The ministry was not a "success," even in the hands of Christ. How easy to blame the minister because he does not make all the city good! That miracle, being moral and spiritual, and not of a nature that comes within the limits even of almightiness, the Son of God himself could not accomplish. The youngest child can double its fist against God. Every heart can shut the door in the face of Jesus Christ. Let us accept the circumstance as an encouragement marked by many limitations. Let us first be quite sure that we have done for the city, in our degree, what Christ did for Jerusalem before we plead that where Christ failed it is impossible for us to succeed. This is not an encouragement to indifference; this is

not a sanction to careless work; this is not a plea that should bar the soul against the claim and agony of sacrifice. When Jesus Christ wept over the city he realised this fact, that even he could do nothing more. Is omnipotence exhausted? There is no omnipotence in moral suasion. Omnipotence has to do only with vulgar things. The almightiness of God is but a pagan attribute —almighty in moulding star bubbles, almighty in keeping the infinite machinery in action, so that there can be no collision, friction, or tumult amid all the roll of the stars. There is no omnipotence amongst hearts. God has, so to say, divided his sovereignty with man in this particular. Even God can only reason with man; at last, indeed, his almightiness may become a destructive agent, but even that does not relieve it from the comment we have made upon it, as relating only to those things which come within the sphere of creation and destruction. Men have to be persuaded to be good. O mystery, miracle, wonder, greater than any other surprise—a man has to be wrestled with to keep him out of hell! These are the difficulties of unbelief and these the difficulties of faith. You would justly say that it would be impossible for any man to have any other conviction than that which is spiritual, lofty, pure, beneficent; such reasoning would *à priori* be pronounced correct, inevitable; that a man with brain, mind, mental fire, moral sensitiveness, should ever do one mean thing is impossible. So it would seem, so it ought to be; the only difficulty in the way is, first, personal consciousness and experience, and secondly, universal history. It is quite in our power not to see the city. You can get rid of the comfortless spectacle if you like. You can live at the financial centre, and gamble all day; you can live at the political centre and gamble in another way both day and night; you can live at the literary centre, and enjoy yourselves in sweet companionship with "the dead but sceptred monarchs who still rule our spirits from their urns"; you can live at the home centre, and when the wind howls you have only to stir the fire and the answering flame will make you warm, you have only to touch the bell and order bread and wine and manifold luxury. You can thus live in London and know nothing about it. For such seclusion, monasticism, selfishness, literary luxury, there is no sanction in Christianity. You can come home every night with a broken heart because of

misery you can hardly touch, and can never heal; you can come home to hug your children with a tenderer embrace because of the orphans whose fathers are not dead, the widows whose husbands are still alive, the agony that defies even the approach of prayer. All that any of us can do is to undertake the little area within which he personally, socially, or ecclesiastically lives.

As a minister in the city of London I appeal to men who do not spend their sabbaths in the City. We have a claim upon you. You make your money in the City—where do you spend it? Are you the men to talk about absenteeism as a political blemish on the history of landlordism? Come, we are not going to talk about that until we have first cast the beam out of our own eye. You do not make your money in the suburbs, you only reside there. It is the City that feeds the world. Is it right that a man should be six days in the City and then turn his back upon it on the seventh day when moral agency, spiritual activity, is to be set in motion for the redemption of those for whom there is no country, no green field, no singing bird in the blossoming hedges? Is this right? Nor can I allow you to escape on the lie—the lie—that you have so much to do in the suburbs. So you have, but you never do it! Do let us tell our lies anywhere but in the house of God. In the suburbs you say you have so much to do for the City; in the City you have so much to do where you reside—you who could pay off that little chapel debt with one scratch of the pen, you talking about having so much to do for the little or the great suburban place. But whatever you have to do for that place you owe your prosperity to the City: you sell your goods in the City. The whole commercial pulsation of the world is, in a sense, in the cities of the world, and not in the villages and suburbs. In this connection the word "city" must apply to London, Paris, New York, and all the great centres of population, enterprise and activity. It is easy to mount the wagonette, and touch the steeds that will hardly bear touching, so fiery are they, and drive away into the green and beautiful places; but what of those who are left behind, to curse society, because they know not what else to curse, for deprivation that gnaws like hunger, and for solitude that is aggravated by a sense of neglect? Is it right that these

City churches on all hands should be dying out? Is it right that great Episcopal churches should be torn down or sold because it is impossible to maintain them? Is it right that the whole City should be left and that Sunday should be a suburban luxury? Every family that goes into the suburbs and leaves London on a Sunday to take care of its own churches and schools is a guilty family and ought not to prosper; some member of the family should say, We owe what we are and have to the City, and part of the day shall be given to visitation, to teaching, to exercises of Christian sympathy within the boundaries of the City.

Nor does the matter end here. Given a thoroughly spiritual, Christianised city, and the influence of it will be felt thrilling through every point of the great circumference. A converted London is a converted world. When London is religiously in earnest, all its wealth, education, and intellectual force and social eminence devoted to the good of men, the world will know it, must feel it, and will inevitably respond to it. I would have our City churches the greatest of all. In speaking thus, I do not speak of one communion, but of all communions. I want every City church to be crowded to the doors, and if this were all I would not repeat the desire; but it is not all. It is suggestive of the further possibility, which ought to be the further assured fact, that crowded churches should mean energetic, evangelistic, devoted communities. A crowded church is nothing in itself; if it be a sign, a symbol, a symptom, meaning that behind all this, and after all this, there is a spiritual inspiration and Christian consecration, then a crowded church is an honour, a glory, a profound and inexhaustible spiritual satisfaction.

Chapter xx.

JESUS TAUNTED.

"AND it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel"—not an exceptional work, but on a particular and memorable day. This was the circle within which Jesus Chrtst moved—namely, he taught the people in the temple and preached the gospel. A familiar word to us is the word "gospel," but not a familiar word in the four evangelists. Does Mark ever use it? Does John ever use it? Is it ever used in the Gospel according to Matthew? —but once; and that not in a direct and positive sense. But Luke cannot do without it. So it is that we choose our particular words, and men become attached to forms and expressions and ideas and methods, and their names become involved with the outworking of these, so that sometimes a feature which to others would be regarded but as transient becomes a permanent expression of an individual genius and consecration. Luke uses the word "gospel" some ten times in his narrative. When he writes the Acts of the Apostles the word "gospel" has been counted in the record in about twenty instances. The man who uses the word "gospel" most frequently after Luke is the Apostle Paul. What wonder? They were companions; they talked much with one another, and took sweet counsel together; and thus, by the action of a spiritual masonry, they came to use one another's favourite expressions. There is a plagiarism that is honest; there is a talk that is contagious; there is a way of uttering Christian experience that so commends itself to others that they must needs reproduce it. Jesus Christ taught in the temple, and evangelised, told the good news, related what men could then receive respecting the kingdom of God upon earth. And never was such talk heard by human listeners: they were spell-bound. They were not all believing: some were of a doubtful and

sceptical mind; yet the spell that was upon them wrought like a divine fascination, and made immediate contradiction difficult, if not impossible. Sometimes we think we could answer an argument; but we are restrained from attempting to do so by the sweetness of the music which accompanies its utterance. The argument failed, but the music soothed. It is often so with character, consistency, beneficence. Some put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, by simply doing well; doing good, by being liberal with both hands; and tender, ineffably tender, towards all human infirmity and weakness, so that listeners say, We could not accept his argument; but it would be impossible to reject the man himself. In this way all may acquire most beneficent power, most sacred and elevating influence. It is not possible for all to be great: blessed be God, it is possible for all to be good.

As Jesus Christ was engaged in this work, "the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders, and spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?" So they had their favourite word; they, too, must have their badge and pass-word, their mechanical, unsympathetic, chilling masonry. Where is thy name written? where are thy certificates? who accredits thee? open thine hand, and let us see how the thunder lies in it: we are startled and perplexed when we compare the instrument with the effect; what we know about thee does not correspond with what we see thee do and what we hear thee say: explain thyself. When a man can explain himself he is done. There are those who delight in vivisection; and in hunting for the life, they kill it. There are those who would try to make a man out and cannot do so, and they give him up as an enigma. The gospel can never be made out, in the sense of getting behind it; for it covers infinity, as it came up from eternity. The authority is in the thing that is done. If you cannot explain the metaphysic you can estimate the practical; if you cannot get behind so as to see all the secrets of God, you can get in front and see what those secrets do when they embody themselves in living character and active exertion. Christians should be the proof of Christianity. Let the men speak the praises of the Saviour who has redeemed

and inspired them. Christians, too, should be inexplicable as to root and core and essence, and innermost spring of life and purpose. But there should be no mystery on the disc of their conduct, nothing evasive, shuffling, ambiguous, equivocal. Whatever mystery may attach to the spirit there must be no mystery about the conduct as to its purpose, beneficence, nobleness, charity;—let the mystery lurk in all these if you will, but let there be enough of explanation, clearness, and frankness of thought and action, to constrain confidence and elicit healthful approbation.

By what authority do you preach? By the authority of the issue. We have seen the effect of the gospel, and therefore we preach it. Others could account for preaching metaphysically; most of us can account for it practically. We have seen a man healed, we have seen a leper cleansed, we have seen a barbarian civilised, chastened, refined, ennobled; and this has all been done by Jesus Christ of Nazareth; therefore we preach, that others may be touched by the same power, renewed by the same divine energy, and brought to the same perfectness of spiritual quality, and the same dignity of moral intention. It is always forgotten that Christianity can ask questions as well as Unbelief. It seems to be thought by some that the mark of interrogation is the private property of infidels and sceptics and scribes and Pharisees, and that poor dumb Christians can only sing hymns and psalms, and never ask any questions. They are difficult men to meet in interrogation. All things are not plain on the side of unbelief, opposition, hostility. There are riddles in the open book of providence as well as in the metaphysics of divine rule. Jesus Christ could reason, inquire, discuss, and impale men with a gentleness which did not at all mitigate the agony of the impalement. If Christianity chooses rather to be positive in its action, distinctly beneficent and aggressive rather than verbally controversial, Christianity has its reasons for choosing that policy. Christianity says, Time is brief, the case is urgent; the remedy is here: instead of paltering with word-mongers, let us declare the positive redemption, the immediate, gracious, ever-present kingdom of God, and truth, and light. But the enemy always created an opportunity for the Saviour. We have already

shown that we owe more to the enemy than to the friend in the New Testament. If there had been no enemy there could have been no New Testament as we have it now. All the great parables were spoken in reply to hostility. It is difficult to continue in a monotonous course of instruction, not because there is any failure of genius on the part of the teacher, but because the people so soon weary and tire. Thus opposition becomes useful, controversy becomes an ally of the pulpit, and question-asking is turned to high account by men who watch the signs of the times, and show to all who care to see how the kingdom of God is always the question of the day.

Having been thus taunted through the medium of interrogation, having been thus insulted by circumlocution—a favourite method with men who even in cruelty cannot give up politeness—Jesus Christ "spake a parable unto them." To their credit be it said, they could read between the lines. They were shrewd men; they knew what they heard. "They perceived that he had spoken this parable against them." They were, therefore, good men to preach to. The infinite difficulty of the preacher is when the people perceive nothing. He can preach well who knows that every man is saying to himself, The preacher means me; he is hard upon me, but he will be gentle before he closes; he has now dragged me to the seat of judgment, but presently he will speak to me gospel music, and he will show me how to escape this great dilemma. It is pointless preaching that nobody applies. Preaching of this kind could be continued for ever, and the minister would acquire a reputation for being a very harmless and a very quiet, and it may be kind, sort of a man, who is finding his way down to oblivion without giving anybody any trouble. We have lost in too large a degree the courage of our convictions. The pulpit should be an institution feared by every scribe and chief priest and Pharisee. Let some pulpits find their fame in their odiousness to wicked men. Whilst others may be acquiring renown in other directions, would God some pulpits could acquire first notoriety and then solid repute as instruments that are feared by every evil-doer, every tyrant, every statesman who is playing falsely with the destinies of his country! We may do this in various ways, sometimes through the medium of

parable. A great deal can be said through the agency of an active imagination. We need not always say everything directly and frankly. There are more instruments in the world than cannon-balls. The resources of civilisation are not reduced to paving-stones. Let us now and again try a parable, an image, a mirror held up to evil nature, that it may see itself and cry out, Take away that duplicate; I will look anywhere but at a visage so indicative of evil purpose, so suggestive of evil life. So Jesus Christ was a judge through parable. He could speak in all styles. Many of the beatitudes approach the conciseness of epigram; some of his retorts might be characterised as specimens of the highest wit; then as to his parables, every one of them is a judgment or a gospel, a condemnation or a reward, or a door swinging back upon all the amplitude and glory of heaven. No one minister may be able to take this range, but each of us can find out his own department, sphere, faculty, opportunity, and all can combine in a testimony the clearness and emphasis of which it would be impossible to mistake.

"By what authority doest thou these things?" By the need of the hour. The minister finds his authority in human necessity. By what authority dost thou speak against evil? Because it is evil—that is the authority. Oh, blessed halcyon days when the pulpit can look upon all manner of evil and never recognise its existence! Who would attend such a pulpit? Who would love it and desire it? Not men of justice; not strong-minded, earnest, equitable men. Sometimes even silent men are forced to speech, and the very fact of their speech being only occasional lends to it a quaint but poignant emphasis; it is known that they would not have spoken but for the pressure of the times. Wise are they who take such note of occasion and historic development as to know when they ought to speak and in what tone they ought to deliver themselves.

This is one aspect of Jesus Christ's work; another and almost totally different aspect is given in other parts of the chapter:—"Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection"; and they had a case of infinite interest to their finite minds. It was a novel case. When they

collected the particulars they gloated over the anecdote as one that would upset the whole fabric of distinctively Christian revelation. Where they got the case nobody knows. Who cares to inquire into the genealogy of an anecdote? If they made it up they were clever, and if they did not make it up they were probably easily imposed upon. But the case was stated, and they waited with that patient impetuosity which can hardly hold its tongue, that wants to laugh because it is sure it has conquered. When they had told their tale, Jesus Christ answering said unto them: You are wrong at the foundation; ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures: there can be no such possibility as you indicate in reference to the resurrection; they who rise again "neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." They were wrong, where all men who oppose Christ are wrong, on the base line. The error was not only in the superstructure; the sophism or the mistake was in the foundation. Jesus Christ withdrew the corner-stone, and all the Sadducees went home again, sorry that they had troubled him. It is always so with the Son of God. His answers are fundamental, and therefore inclusive. We tamper with details, and inquire into vexatious incidents, and puzzle ourselves about what we call phenomena, and when we state our case we are told that we were wrong in the first line. He only can be really sound in all thought and Christian service who is sound in the foundation, who has got hold of first principles about whose quality there is no doubt. If we are wrong in the foundation we cannot be right in the superstructure. We must know on what we are building.

Jesus Christ having disposed of these men made a grand popular appeal. "Then in the audience of all the people." Christianity is an open religion: it invites the consideration, the criticism, the judgment of the popular mind. It has its secrets, which eternity will be required to unfold; but its sublime moral appeals may be heard and answered by all. "Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples, Beware of the scribes." Then he described the men, saying, "which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the

highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation." This is the man who uttered the beatitudes! Is that the tongue we heard on the mount, saying, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God; blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"? What says he? "Beware of the scribes!" His voice changes; he becomes another man; he thunders, lightens, denounces, and already drives into darkness those who have opposed the commandment and counter-worked the purpose of God.

We must put all these aspects together if we would see Jesus Christ in anything like the totality of his character. We find him, in the first verse, teaching the people condescendingly, breaking up all the long words into little ones, that he might get down to all classes of mind. We find him preaching the gospel or evangelising, bidding men welcome to God's banquet, to God's forgiveness, to God's heaven, and doing it as if his whole life were, as it was in reality, involved in the issue. We find him raising his head, as it were, from the book, and looking at the chief priests and scribes. In the seventeenth verse we read, "And he beheld them." That word "beheld" is pregnant with meaning. It is not the ordinary English word which signifies he saw them, he cast a glance upon them; but it means that he fastened his gaze upon them, looked through their hypocrisy, burned them with his look, scorched them with his eyes. "He beheld them," and they fell back from that gaze as men flee from advancing fire. Then we see him for a moment interested in some poor creatures who had got together a number of impossible details for the purpose of puzzling him with a question, and we hear him saying in a tone which cannot be printed—a tone half of judgment and half of compassion—"Poor souls! you are wrong at the foundation; you do not understand the Scriptures; you have to begin the alphabet yet." Then we see him answering certain of the scribes; and then we hear him expounding by interrogation a glorious psalm; and then we see him rising into the dignity of moral indignation. It is the same Christ throughout. His voice is a voice of a tempest, yet it is the whisper of anxious love, the music of infinite pity.

This chapter, therefore, gives us an outline of the great work which the Christian ministry has to do in this and in every age; teaching the people and preaching the gospel—that is the basis work; answering objectors in a way which gives them to feel that they have approached the wrong man if they have desired to overthrow him by shallow questioning and moral impertinence; correcting men who have made great mistakes in fundamental lines, and then judging the age as represented by its chief personages. Who would dare to rebuke a Prime Minister? Are we not too eloquent in denouncing Agnostics, and too silent in reproving men who are misleading a nation? We should, if pursuing that policy of denunciation, create a great revolution in our churches. That is precisely what we want everywhere—a great expulsion of all seat-holders and an opportunity for the return of those who are really in earnest about the kingdom of God. We are always hindered by the presence of the one man, rich, or prejudiced or peculiar, the exceptional man: we wonder what he will think and what he will do. We ought not to count him; he ought not to be in the census at all, unless he finds some vague position in a great etcetera. What we have to do is to reveal a kingdom, to declare a gospel, to set forth a judgment. I am not saying on which side that judgment should be, except that it should always be a word for the helpless, the weak, the down-trodden, the friendless. It should always be thunder against iniquity, unrighteousness, cupidity, perverseness, and all meanness of soul. When he comes who will so talk he will have a hard time of it; he will be taken out to be crucified. This must be so. No man can commit himself to judgment and be allowed to die in his bed; he must, in some way or sense, be hanged by the neck until he be dead. Could I speak to young ministers I should not hesitate to foretell such a course, and to urge them to be faithful to conscience and to duty. It is not necessary that they should live, but it is necessary that they should be true and faithful and just

Chapter xx. 38.

"God . . . of the living."

THE GOD OF THE LIVING.

PERHAPS the text might be made more vivid in its expression by taking the words before, namely, "not a God of the dead, but of the living." This is the very thing which nobody believes. It is probably believed universally in words, but when in this connection we use the word "believes" we use it in its intensest and fullest meaning, and in that sense probably there is not a man under heaven who believes that God is the God of the living. They are not the worst atheists who openly call themselves by that dreary name; such persons are comparatively harmless: the man who is injuring God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost is the man who professes to believe in that God and yet does not. It is the Church that is killing God. If men believed that God was the God of the living, there would be no more fear, or darkness, or sorrow, or tears; nothing would come amiss, nothing would inflict upon the soul humiliating surprise; we should live in the very quietness and peace and glory of God. The kind of atheism that is ruining life is the atheism which says in words "I believe in God," and then goes away and lives as if there were no God to believe in. It is merely theoretical belief that is sowing the earth with the seed of perdition. Yet there will be many a protest against this suggestion; many a man will say, speaking for himself, that he believes that God is the God of the living: but I would press upon him the inquiry, In what sense do you believe that? Do you believe it with limitations? Do you believe it with certain qualifications which you could hardly put into words? Do you really, intensely, and unchangeably believe that God is the chief factor in the present life? Does he look in through your window every morning? Does he watch

you in your sleeping hours? Does he direct you in all your ways? And do you never put on hat or boot, or take up staff to walk with, without first asking if you may? "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy path." Is that only a verse in the Bible, or is it a principle that rules and and elevates and guides your whole course of conduct? We have a kind of general faith, or faith in theological generalities; we are somewhat partial to propositions that have about them the haze and the dimness of old age: but what about the immediate life, the present necessity, the temper of the moment? Do we ask God when we shall lie down and when we shall get up, or do we assume ninety-nine hundredths of our life, and leave God the odd hundredth to make of it what he pleases? Let us be earnest and searching in these matters; otherwise our so-called religion will sink into superstition, and our superstition itself will sink into ruin, and ruin will bring with it moral contagion, moral pestilence, social blight and death.

Men are so prone to worship somebody else's God. This is not the spirit of Christ, this is not the dominant message of Christianity to the soul: every man must worship, so to say, his own personal God; he must not have indirect commerce with heaven, he must do immediate business with the skies. Do not receive anything intermediately, except as a kind of incidental help; open up a great, wide thoroughfare to God, and travel on that road night and day, and never be found on any other road; then you will believe that God is the living God of living men; not an Old Testament idea, or a New Testament idea, or a first century idea, but the one all-including, all-glorifying fact of creation and eternity. We do not want any books of references or any books of evidences. If a man's religion stand upon the foundation of argument, it stands upon no foundation at all. A man's religion must stand upon the ground of experience, of immediate, personal, loving intercourse with God, so that a man shall be able to say, I saw God this morning: I will refer this to my Father; having had an interview with heaven, I will give you my answer: God is behind me, before me, on my right hand, on my left hand, and he lays his hand upon me, and everything that I do seems to be of importance to

my Father in heaven. When a man has to go to some book to find out what he believes, he believes nothing. You must be your faith. "The word that I speak unto him," said Christ, "shall be in him": he does not take it with him as an external article, he does not hold it in his hand, as who should say, Behold my belief is written in this paper, and if you would know what I believe read these words in black and white. That is not faith. As with faith so with preaching. A man must not have his sermon, for then he would be no preacher; he must be his sermon, and then he never can be other than eloquent. It is just here that the Church has been making its mistakes with painful consistency. It has had a library to which it has gone; it has kept God in the library. I want God kept in the living-room, wherever that is; if we live in the library, so be it. We must not keep God in the ornamental rooms, but in the place we live in, and so realising the nearness of the divine presence the humblest chamber will become as the vestibule of heaven.

It is possible to dishonour the very God that we pretend to worship. We say God is in heaven. Nothing of the kind: God is not in heaven in any sense of the word which implies distance, palatial luxury, and security and delight; God is in the field, on the highroad; God is in thee, thou poor fool, if thou wouldst open thine eyes and see him in the sanctuary of thine heart. We will have God in heaven; nothing can persuade us that he is anywhere else: we forget that wherever he is his presence is heaven. The Church will not have it so: it will have God in heaven, immeasurable number of miles away, and it will have all its arrangements formal and mechanical: immediate absorption in God would appear to the Church to be a kind of sentimental blasphemy, whereas it is the central doctrine of Christ, it is the essential principle of the Cross.

We also dishonour the very men whose memories we celebrate. Who honours the Apostle Paul? No man, except in the character of a historical personage, somebody who lived, maybe, eighteen centuries ago, somewhere, under certain circumstances detailed in some book. That is not the Paul to honour. The Paul to honour is the man who living to-day would repeat the Paul of

eighteen centuries ago. Paul asks no granite stone at our hands; the mighty heroic prince of God does not ask for our memorial brass; speaking from his urn he says, If I lived amongst you nineteenth-century men, I would tear society to pieces. The revolutionist, inspired by justice and chastened by reason and ennobled by reverence, is the only man that really honours the Apostle Paul. Other honour is worthless flattery, encomium that never reaches the object of the worthless eulogy. There are those who honour, almost worshipfully, Martin Luther. Martin Luther is honoured when Lutherism is propagated. We cannot honour Martin Luther, but we can repeat Lutherism, and Lutherism is Martin Luther in his noblest form. If Luther lived to-day he would eat and drink amongst the people, he would have his music, he would sit down at the table and discourse eloquently upon all the affairs of earth; he would rise, and, shaking himself like a lion, he would condemn all evil things; he would flame and burn against all restrictions placed upon individual conscience and private judgment; he would hurl his thunders against the little popes that are trying to snub the rising genius of immediate progress.

If Martin Luther were himself to come back again, we should kill him. If Christ were to descend to the earth again, we should take him to a place called Calvary. It is not Christ in any historical sense we want, but Christianity, Christ's own deep sweet saving truth, Christ's blessed spirit of sacrifice and obedience. There are those who honour everything that is about a hundred years old as against things that are of immediate conception, and immediate purpose and use. Only give some people a tune that Wesley sang, and they think that they are as near heaven as they ever will be—which is indeed probable, now I think of it. Only give them a tune that was sung a hundred and fifty years ago, and the very fact that it was sung a hundred and fifty years ago is the only fact they care about! whereas if Wesley were here now he would be listening to the tunes on the streets. That will do! the fine old statesman would say, if that tune were baptised and consecrated it would be useful in the church: I will fit it to words. He would take the tune home and link it to worthy expression, and that tune would be sung in the church

next Sunday. Why do not men see that the very things they praise as belonging to a hundred years ago were a hundred years ago quite novel? They had not at that period of time the advantage of antiquity, they were then new, they had to run the gauntlet of all kinds of opposition, and establish themselves in the confidence of the Church: and that is what we must do now. If any man can make a new tune, let him make it, and the common heart of humanity will soon pronounce upon its merits. It is possible so to use history as to debase it. There is a kind of evil disease in some men which will not allow them to believe that though Wesley is dead God lives. Theirs is a God of antiquity: ours is a God of antiquity, but also the God of the present throbbing moment. We must have no patience with persons who take the life out of God, and worship him as a mere term in ancient history. It is what God is to me at this moment that is the all-important and all-determining factor in my life. Of what avail to tell me that there was once a God called the God of Abraham? Any God that can die is no God. The only God I can worship is a living present God, who is giving me new experience, new history, new faculties, new inspirations, new tunes, always giving me new grace and new power to reveal himself. There is a novelty that is rich with an eternal secret. By what means can we get rid of the people we do not want to keep, the whining, sentimental, superstitious worshippers of something that happened a hundred and fifty years ago? Will any infidel build a church to hold such people? I would transfer them all in one letter. They are the infidels. We had better call them by their right name and put them to their right uses. They who believe that God is here, now, in all the fulness of his light and love and grace, they who believe that every step they take is ordered from heaven, if they have put their life into God's keeping, they are the believers, and they never can be argued down.

We are then called upon by this train of suggestion to believe that Providence is not something that expired long ago, but that Providence is in beneficent and detailed action now. Who can draw himself up to that stature of faith? What, God in action now! I could believe that he may have been in action five

hundred years ago, but to believe that everything is under his control now, at this very present moment, baffles my imagination, and puts my religious faith to severe tests. Yet I must accept that doctrine. Appearances are sometimes against the theory that God is in action now; we are oftentimes the victims of appearances, we do not take in field enough, within whose amplitude we can judge fairly and justly of God's purposes in life. When, in a great flood that carried with it village after village, a mother put her lost child upon some driftwood, and the child said, "Mamma, you have always told me God would take care of me: will he take care of me now?" I must say there is one way of looking at that which utterly shatters our religious faith; there is another way of looking at it which may confirm the faith which is momentarily in peril. We have formed a wrong conception of death. We first of all take our logical sword and cut the filaments which connect the worlds, and then we say, Will God take care of me now? What is care? What is taking care of a little human life? All men must die, they must go out of this world by fire or flood or disease: what is, in the largest sense of the term, taking care of human life? In that case, so pathetic and so tragical, I would say, Pity the living, not the dead; pity her who has to wait a few months or years and carry all the trouble in her soul, do not pity those who by flood or fire or pestilence or disease are urged into their destiny. We must talk of such tragedies fifty years hence; time must work out its ministry of soothing and suggestion and comfort, aye, and in many a day-dream we must see from what awful possibilities they have been saved who under circumstances of violence have been detached from our side. Let those who can testify as to God's presence in their life be no longer silent. I can bear testimony that God has been with me. I have felt him. There be those who with cold pen and ink write whether we know God by some intellectual process. I know him by my feeling, by my experience, by my spiritual elevation; I know him by the view I have been enabled to take of all past things in my life: they were painful, humiliating, tormenting; they were full of disappointment and distress; yet every one of them was right. You cannot put that down by any argumentative process. This is not an affidavit in the court of

intellect, it is sworn testimony in the court of conduct, character, and human feeling.

You must therefore believe, if faithful to this line of suggestion, that inspiration is now going on. Can you believe in a God who has nothing more to say to his human family? Has God quite gone from his Church? Does he never whisper to any of his sons and daughters? Does he never interpret the Scripture by some ministry of the Holy Ghost known and felt by the individual heart alone? May not God have changed the method of his inspiration without changing the fact? May not he who once inspired individual men now inspire whole communities and nations of men? May there not be a thought common to civilisation? May there not now be a tendency in movement which can only be accounted for by a sovereign action on the part of God? May he not now inspire actions, great acts of self-sacrifice and generosity; may he not now so work in the human mind that men shall keep back nothing from him, but make themselves poor every night that every morning they may go forth and reap a harvest of gold? What is your God? an antiquity, a mythologic conception, some dim nebulous impalpable thing? or is he Father, Shepherd, Friend, in you, near you, round about you? Is he the builder of your house from the basement to the roof; is he the chief guest at your table; does he keep all your account books; does he watch you with eyes of love? And has he never anything new to say to his ministers? Do they go forth Sunday after Sunday to tell something that he has not told them? Does he not now say to his servants, Arise, the time of battle has come, or seed-sowing; rise, I will go with thee, the people are waiting for us, and I will tell you in the same hour what ye shall say: put away all your own little ability and cleverness and smartness, and put away all attempts to patronise your Father in heaven; I will go with you, and fill you with the Holy Ghost, and the opening of your mouth shall be as the sounding of music, and the people will answer with a glad amen? This is the God we worship, this is the God for whose presence we pray. Unchangeableness in providential action does not mean monotony. God "spake at sundry times" and "in divers manners." We will not allow that expression "divers

manners," although it is part of the very economy of heaven. God does nothing by mere repetition: he gives every man an individuality; every atom casts its own little shadow, every soul has its own momentum from God, every voice has in it a tone that no other voice can utter. Let us therefore find God's consistency in his providence, and not in the methods of it; let us find God's inspiration, not in some mechanical theory concerning it, but in the feeling that it is created round about us in the minds and hearts of men. When men say in great bodies, whether in families, municipalities or nations, Come, let us go unto the house of the Lord! that is inspiration; the wind is from heaven, rushing and mighty, and there is no dust of earth in all its sounding tempest.

We are not then to limit the Holy One of Israel. Let God work as he may. All ministers are necessary to form a ministry. No one preacher can say everything. When you say, What about the preaching of Christianity? you can say nothing about it until you have heard every preacher under heaven; the man you have not heard is the man who may contribute the completing touch. God looks upon his ministry as one: we unfortunately look upon the ministry as a series of individuals, one personality having little or no connection with another. To God it is a solidarity, not an association of atoms that have no relation to one another. So with Providence, the great movements of the world are one in purpose and in tendency; and so with inspiration, there is an inspired sentiment, and who dare say that jurisprudence to-day is not in the highest Christian countries inspired? The noble lord comes before the law, or the noble scion of a noble house, and the one who brings him before the law is some poor orphaned friendless woman: what will jurisprudence do in the highest countries? It will do right, and the noble scion of a noble house must make compensation to the life he has wronged. When that voice of judgment is heard God is heard. When our laws are good, when our judgment is impartial, when our honour is without a stain, when we speak truth and fear no consequences, let us know that God is in the tabernacle of his people, and that he is leading the civilisation of the world. What we want, then, is living character, a living Church. When we hear discussions of

an ecclesiastical kind, what are they all about? Listening to these controversies about words and phrases, see how warm these men become. They smite the table. Why so hot, my little sirs? What do you know about it? Nothing—nothing. It will require eternity to settle the things you want to handle as if they were so many pennyweights of gold. What you can do is to love justice and mercy and truth; what you can do is to be honest, helpful, noble, Christlike; what you can do is to realise God in conduct. Yet how pitiable it is to see doxy versus doxy, and many clouds of words. There is a friend of yours, it may be, who settles everything by saying it. The Unitarians, he says—the blockheads! Of course the Unitarians, then, are all settled. Strauss and Renan and Wellhausen—the blockheads! That is one way of treating the case; but it is a useless way in all instances. We cannot settle metaphysics or eternal questions within the little cage of time, but this, through Jesus Christ, our dying, risen Lord, we can do, this by the power of the Cross of Christ lies within the compass of our ability—we can do justly, we can love mercy, we can walk humbly with God.

Chapter xxi. 14-29.

"Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

HOW TO TREAT COMMOTION.

JESUS CHRIST is teaching us how to conduct ourselves in the midst of tremendous commotions. The chapter should be read from verse 5 to verse 36: within that space you hear thunder, and great winds blowing like tempests; you are made familiar with the shock of earthquake and the falling of things supposed to be immovable. There is in very deed what we have termed tremendous commotion, nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and great earthquakes, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. How are we to conduct ourselves amid all this infinite storm? Can we do anything? Nothing. There are occasions

upon which we are taught that we have no strength, and that our strength is to stand still. What man can turn away the whirlwind by a wave of his impotent hand? What skill can control the earthquake, or keep that perpendicular which the Lord has shaken at its root? But may not men have the gift of eloquence under the sting of accusation? If they have that gift they had better hold it in abeyance. The accusation is also a great whirlwind, a tempest let loose. A storm must be left to cry itself to rest. Even cyclones cannot work always: they have their little sweep of madness, and then they pass away as if they begged to be forgiven. What a voice of calmness is this amidst all the storm! The voice could rise to the dignity of the occasion. The speaker shows how energetic he can be in portrayal, description, and representation of elemental war and scenic havoc: now his voice becomes all the tenderer because of its louder tones in the other direction; like whispered love falls the injunction—"Settle it therefore in your hearts"—not to trouble yourselves about your own defence: the case is not yours; you are only representatives, you are only speaking a word which you have heard from heaven; the answer must come whence the word came: God does not give half a blessing, the Lord does not give you a gospel, and then leave you to defend it—he will use you in both instances as an instrument; therefore settle it in your hearts to let God be your strength and refuge. He will know how much you trust him by feeling how much you lean upon him,—"Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." He loves us when we do not keep back so much as one finger that it may work for us in some little skilful way, but when we give ourselves wholly up to him, saying, Lord, undertake for me; I can see nothing, do nothing; I am poor and blind and helpless; I hide myself in thine almightiness,—the roof of that pavilion was never shattered by any storm. Be instruments in the hand of God, and wait for the divine word.

"For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." He will give the mouth as well as the wisdom. He will not only give the great lesson in sacred philosophy, but he will shape the lip, and tip with fire the tongue that shall express the divine thought and

purpose: it is all of God. We have nothing that we have not received. Do leave room in your lives for the action of your Creator. If you have sketched out anything you are going to say, let it be but a framework within which God can operate in all the sweep of his power and all the radiance of his wisdom. We should pray better if we did not think about it beforehand. We should qualify ourselves to pray by first feeling the depth and agony of our want. Feel the hunger, and the petition will come, in urgent and prevailing words. No man who is in real hunger prepares a speech about it; he has but to open his lips, and he becomes livingly eloquent. All this instruction is part of the larger scheme of education. Jesus Christ knew what was in men, he knew how apt they were to be self-reliant, self-defensive, and how much they would trust to their own craftiness, and to their own choice of words, so that they might resist the enemy. There is only one resistance effectual in the case of the oncoming foe:—"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." We cannot keep these mischievous fingers from some little erection, and some small miracle of self-protection. Why not live nakedly before God? The sword is long and sharp, but it is blunt beside God's lightning.

Thus trusting upon God, we are to expect the very worst that can come. Some idea of that worst is given in verses 16 to 18. Looking to the Revised Version we receive at the opening of verse 16 a point of light. In the Authorised Version the first word is "and"; change it into "but"—"But ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends." The emphasis can only be received fully into the mind by reading verses 15 and 16 together:—"I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. But" for all that you shall have trouble enough. How double-sided is the whole economy of God's ministry amongst men. At the end of verse 15 we thought we had nothing to do and nothing to fear; the paraphrase of the Saviour's words would be, Keep yourselves perfectly quiet, wait for the living God, plan nothing in the way of self-excuse, mitigation, palliation, defence, rest the whole thing upon your Father, and I will give you a mouth and wisdom which shall confound all

your adversaries. There is a happy end. No: but, notwithstanding all this, you shall have the ground struck from under your feet by the very friends that ought to support you most constantly and lovingly; your own children shall fasten their teeth in your flesh; those that ought to make your reputation their own will pour slanderous words upon your fame. You shall have mouth and eloquence enough, but some of you shall be put to death before you have a chance to open your lips. Could not this Man that gave us mouth and wisdom have caused that we should not have been betrayed? Yes, but that would not have been for our advantage: we only understand one another in times of crisis; we do not know one another in fair weather and in prosperity, in smooth seas and in the middle of golden harvest-fields, where there is plenty for both hands, and where all the birds of heaven seem to have been gathered for our entertainment and delight. Betrayal tests friendship. Real religious conviction tests the household. We must put such verses as 15 and 16 together; and even 17 must come in, for it says, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." It is easy to be Christian now. Not to be Christian is to lose some measure of social standing; not to name the name of Christ now is to incur the opprobrium of being atheistical and untrustworthy and morally pestilential. There was a time when to be a Christian was to be a martyr, when to be a Christian was to live in darkness and contempt and derision, and ostracism from every fireside that was indicative of the higher respectability.

In verse 18 the Saviour seems to take up the thread of the thought in verse 16. We could have done well without verses 16 and 17; every man could have done very well without the storm. Verse 18 reads—"But there shall not a hair of your head perish." Change this "but" into "and," then hear the weird music, listen to the paradoxical exhortation—"Ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. And there shall not an hair of your head perish." Who can understand this talker Christ? We have been deprived of a good deal of meaning by the insertion of this English word "but" in verse 18; now

that the revisers have replaced it with "and," although they involve us in a paradox yet they surround us with a new and beauteous morning light:—And ye shall be betrayed . . . And ye shall be put to death . . . And ye shall be hated . . . And there shall not an hair of your head perish. This is the paradox of truth; this is the mysterious eloquence that takes up into its musical thunder all the emphases of human experience and Christian utterance. How can I be betrayed by parents, brethren, kinsfolks, friends, and yet not a hair of my head perish? How can I be hated of all men for my Lord's sake, and not a hair of my head perish? How can I be put to death, and yet not a hair of my head perish? Here is the exaltation of the larger life over the smaller; here is the elevation of our little roof, hand-made and hand-adorned, into God's great sky not built with hands, flaming with uncounted lamps. What say you of a man who thus talks? Your house shall be burned down, and you shall not be left without a home. How aggravating is such speech. Every picture on the wall shall be cast into the fire, and you shall not lose one vision of beauty. But I have lost all the pictures! So you have; but you have not lost one hue of colour, one gleam of beauty's tenderest light. You shall lose every penny you ever possessed, and ye shall be richer than ever. This is the paradoxical talk of Christ. Paul caught the same feeling, he was the victim of the same contagion; for he said, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." What shall we say to the paradox that we shall fall down dead and be buried with our mother in the churchyard, and there shall not a hair of our head perish? It is all true. We live our selves into the higher meanings. Poor grammar, willing to lend us what oil it can, and willing to trim our lamps as far as it can, falls back at certain points, and says, You must go to rest on the road alone. So there be in God's Church those who have suffered the loss of all things that they might gain all things, who have died that they might begin to live, who have ceased their individuality that they might be translated into sympathy with the almightiness of God himself. There have been those who have glorified exceedingly in tribulation also. These are the practical paradoxes that cannot be understood from the outside; they reveal themselves in all the tenderness of their meaning

and all the lustre of their wisdom to those who pray without ceasing.

"In your patience possess ye your souls." That cannot be explained as it stands. "Patience" has a meaning that must be dug for as men dig for silver. "Possess" is not the right word there. Say, rather, In your patience, or by your patience, you win your souls, you win your lives, you win yourselves. Patience always wins. "He that endureth unto the end"—one more day—"shall be saved." Many cannot endure, therefore they know not what is meant by the salvation of God: for a time they run well, but they soon give up the race, and fall down dead, where they ought to have prayed some larger and tenderer prayer. "Ye did run well; who did hinder you?" "In your patience,"—patience means keeping on, persisting; and persisting means sisting through, pushing by, insisting upon progress: it does not mean aggressiveness, it means persisting by submission; it is the mystery of resignation, it is the miracle of union with him who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself unto God wholly,—that is patience. Patience is not languor, indifference, reluctance, unwillingness to work or suffer: patience is continuance in submission. "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek"—O Man of Gethsemane, who but thyself could have said it?—"turn to him the other also." We cannot do it, but thou didst it, and art not thou the Son of man, and may we not hide our infirmity in thy majesty? What is "possession"? It does not mean the mere act of holding, it means the act of winning, acquiring by a process, seizing hold upon by right of conquest. You have seen some skilled player, some chief in the tournament, who has a silver cup, and we say to him, "That cup is yours?" and he replies, "Not yet." He has it in possession, but he has not yet won it. He says, "If I succeed in two more encounters the cup will be mine." "But you have it in possession?" "Yes, but possession is not final; there is yet a process of conflict, noble test to be passed through: if I succeed on two more occasions no man can take the cup away from me." Here you have exactly what is meant by possession and winning. The cup is in the possession of the man, but it is not yet his by

right; he means to contend for it, and he will be disappointed if he succeed not. That is precisely how it stands with us. You have your souls in possession? Yes. Now win them. Seven years' more fighting. The devil will not let you have one quiet night's rest if he can help it; he can be quiet, he can be siren-like, he can be seductive, he can be defiant, aggressive, threatening; he can be as an angel of light, he can be "that old serpent," or he can be the roaring lion; but he can never be anything except your enemy. Are not our souls our own now? Partially. They are our own to fight for and to win. In your patience you shall win your life. Have I to fight for my own soul as a man would contend for a prize? That is exactly so: now you know the truth. Yourself! what a mistake you make in thinking of your completeness, and how you boast yourself in the sophistical reasoning when you say, "May I not do what I will with my own?" You have nothing your own; you are not yourself your own yet. We are men that we may fight for our manhood; we are souls that we may escape being beasts; we have a touch of immortality, now fight. This is the talk of Jesus Christ to men who were surrounded by cyclones, whirlwinds, tempests, storms, in the highest degree of violence. What a prize to fight for! We say in our songs that men will fight for hearth and home and liberty. They are chivalrous words, they cannot but touch the heroic nerve in every soul, but the sweeter hymn, the louder thunder psalm is this, Win yourselves, win your souls, take up your poor selves to Christ and say, O Captain of my salvation, I bring myself as prey won by thy sword: bind me to thy chariot wheel.

What a revelation we have in these verses of the character of Christ! He calls himself the Good Shepherd: is there anything shepherdly here? Why, every tone is the tone of a shepherd's voice. He calls himself the Bread of Life; is there any nourishment here for the soul? Every word is meant to sustain the soul in its most strenuous endeavours at self-conquest and self-perfecting. He is called the Captain of our salvation: is there aught of a captain's tone here? It is the tone of a general leading on the army to victory. Here is the power of the Church. See it in all these commotions: all evil maddened, all hypocrisy in arms,

all vested interests resentful. O Church of the Crucified, thou wilt trouble the world until the devil is cast out! All these details have changed, but the governing principle remains. To the end life will grow and act within the zone of commotion. To that tumult what is to be our relation? Are we to answer wrath by wrath? Are we to hide ourselves as men who are afraid? Or are we to perform the miracle of controlling uproar and vengeance by the dignity of patience? This method is in harmony with the whole spirit of Christ. This method is not worldly; it would not commend itself to men of the world; it is not in harmony with the militarism, the pomp, and the arrogance of cardboard thrones that have nothing to trust to but scarlet and steel, powder and cannon. But to what vulgar ends do vulgar processes inevitably come! The cannon roars, but the sap rises silently in all the anatomy of the forest; the blood that soaks the soldier's steel feeds no root of corn or flower, but the noiseless dew is secretly working to feed the hungry with bread, and satisfy the tongue that burns with thirst. The army, proud army, mad with resentment or ambition, overwhelms the city in destruction and calls it triumph; but the force we know as gravitation—impalpable, imponderable, invisible—cries not, nor lifts up its voice whilst it holds in perfect sovereignty the empire of the stars. Christ was the Prince of Peace. It was left to him to show how much can be done by quietness, and to show what miracles are possible to patience.

Chapter xxi. 28.

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

COMFORT AND DISCIPLINE.

"AND when these things——" What things? Trumpets, and dances, and festivals? What things? They have been named, generally and in detail, so that there need be no difficulty in ascertaining their scope and quality. The things that were to take place were unpleasant things—"Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven"—as if all things had gone mad. Nor were they material phenomena only, such as could be gazed upon from quiet towers, and estimated by geometricians and men skilled in other law and science:—"But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake." So then, all the action did not take place in sun and moon, in earthquake and famine and pestilence; the prophecy came very near to flesh and bone and spirit,—"And ye shall be betrayed"—worst cruelty of all: a blow is not to be named in quality with treachery,—"And he should be betrayed both by parents"—an impossible revulsion of feeling, and yet historically and literally true in every syllable,—"And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." And so the dark eloquence rolls on, until we come to the words, "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

Now Christ adds, "And when these things" [earthquakes, famines, pestilences, darknesses sevenfold] "begin to come to pass, then——" Everything depends upon the point of time. It is no difficult thing to look up on a summer day, to see the light and the verdure, the blossom and the shaking fruit; but to look up when all the heaven is churned by reason of humanly ungovernable violence of action, and to sing as if standing on solid marble and domed by radiant heavens,—what is this but a miracle, God's supreme miracle of providence and grace? What can these words mean but—Play the man: be strongest when danger is nearest. let the heads that are lifted up be the heads that were bowed down in prayer? No man can look up aright who has not first looked down, with genuine devoutness, self-distrust, and reverent anticipation of seeing that the foot of the ladder is resting on the earth.

There can be no doubt that these words uttered by Jesus Christ refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, and there they might be left: but when can Jesus Christ's words be left at any one point as final? They serve historical purposes, and then take upon themselves new indications; they flame out into omens and signs, and suggestive indications never ripening except intermediately, always having an after harvest, a subsequent revelation and benediction. There can be no doubt that Jesus Christ spoke much about the destruction of Jerusalem. There have been books written full of critical care and learning, which go to show that Jesus Christ has already returned to the earth, has already fulfilled all his prophecies, and has in the destruction of Jerusalem completed the testimony. Some of these books are striking in their method of representing the whole case; their learning, within given bounds, is unquestioned and unquestionable; they are etymological or grammatical books; they are skilful in the analysis and application of terms; but they are false from my point of view. If the universe were a letter these books would be admirable and unanswerable, but the universe is not a letter, it is a thought, a purpose, a beginning; it is something growing. Let men beware how they thrust in the sickle. To thrust in the sickle before the harvest is ripe is to bring back an armful of nothingness. God is a Spirit: therefore never

attempt to define him in catechism or standard of orthodox or literal creed. He is the fulness of all things: lay not upon him, therefore, the measuring-line of an alphabet, as if he could be caught within the few inches covered by the frail letters out of which as out of a root we get our daily speech. Unquestionably, much that Jesus Christ said referred to the fall of Jerusalem. Unquestionably, some of the apostles believed that Jesus Christ was coming back almost immediately, and therefore they said—Let them that are married be as if they were not married; do not complete the furrow ripped up by the plough; pay no heed to these things that are round about you,—he will be here presently! Parts of the New Testament can hardly be read intelligibly without coming to the conclusion that the apostles were expecting Christ—to-day, to-morrow, or in the night between. They were right too. That is the only state of mind in which a wise man can live—never knowing what is going to happen, but always believing that something great is going to occur:—Therefore! If all were accomplished at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, then the whole Bible, Old Testament and New, is an exhausted light. But I can admit that very much did happen then, and that Christ in a certain sense came then, and yet that everything has yet to take place on a wider scale, and with fuller meanings. Jesus Christ never ends. He comes, shows himself, departs; comes again, shows himself, vanishes; he always comes, and is always coming. Without, therefore, disputing with men of letters concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, I can accept very much that they say as to criticism: I would endeavour to turn them from criticism to prophecy, to enlarge the literalist into a seer. Occupying this position, I can find in the text lessons of eternal import, suggestions that come upon our immediate life, blessing it as with light and dew, calling our life to discipline, and enriching our life with rarest, sweetest comfort.

"When these things begin to come to pass"—Then appearances are not the measure and value of life. When these things begin to come to pass, common reason would say, All is over; the battle is lost, the foe has conquered; all we have to do is to accept the destiny of despair, and die as quickly as we can. At

some points of history we need the strong man more than at others,—some mighty, chivalrous, hardy brother who can say, Now, be men! His voice may be an inspiration, for we thought no one dare speak in darkness so dense, and in the face of violence so ungovernable. Behold, this Man of Nazareth, this teacher sent from God, is calmest when the storm is loudest. It would seem to take a tempest to reveal his real peacefulness of soul: if he had so much as fluttered the battle would have been lost; but as violence came after violence, like billow upon billow, his tranquillity became more evident, and influenced others more like an all-inclusive benediction. Yet we seldom learn much from these things, because we will persist in taking the case into our own hands. We think that if we grow hot the Lord will probably avow our side as his own, and Providence might descend to help us. Some men cannot sit still; some cannot be quiet: if they could but be kept under the influence even of an opiate the universe would feel more contented; but they will act, they will run, and stir, and move about, and develop plans, and set up institutions, and if they cannot build a solid house they will do something with tarpaulin. Why will they not love? Why will they not sweetly pray when other speech would be impertinence? Why do we not lie down in the arms of Omnipotence and say, The case is too large for us, dear Lord; we cannot handle these awful materials; but we will sleep in love, and in the morning thou wilt bring back the sun, unshorn of a beam, and we shall get back to our ploughing and our commerce and all our household life because we have lost our fatigue in the embrace and blessing of God. We have nothing to do with appearances; we ought to leave these to the journals of the day that have nothing else to live upon. We are men of faith, men who have found a castle in providence that never can be violated. The face of the saint should never be writhed with a care; it should always be radiant with a sweet, wise confidence.

"When these things begin to come to pass"—Then appearances must be under control. That is the point we have forgotten. When nation rises against nation and kingdom against kingdom, the Former of nations and the Creator of kingdoms

must have the whole mystery in his hand. He is manipulating his own systems, and astronomies, and infinities: let him alone. All things are under control, if the Bible doctrine be right, and that it is right has been proved now for thousands of years. The Bible doctrine is, "The Lord reigneth." May he not sometimes invest himself with clouds and darkness? May he not wear the night as a robe, and go forth to the trumpeting and the drumming of the storm and the tempest, as well as to the quieter music of dawning day and westering sun flooding the whole heaven with purple? "The chariots of God are twenty thousand"; "the clouds are the dust of his feet"; "On cherub and on cherubim full royally he rides." We have not correctly interpreted the darker sides of nature. When the Lord shaped things, and sent them forth with names, he called one part Day, and another part called he Night. Did he fix an hour at which he would withdraw from the astronomy, and say, The dark time must take care of itself, for I now retire to needed rest? He never uttered such words—God never blasphemed. God never left his providence for a moment in the care of any being; he never vacates the throne. All things, therefore, must be considered as under control, management; they are working together for good: at this moment how violent, how portentous, how impossible of settlement! And yet, another revolution of the wheel, where is the noise, where the storm, where the tempest ye spake of, where the darkness that made you afraid? Gone! What queen is that which presides now—what king?—the Lord. This faith is not sentiment, is not rhetoric, is not poetry, because it comes so down into the soul as to make a man doubly strong; this faith says to a man, Dry your tears, and go forth to battle; lift up your head, and begin to sing; fear not, for the deliverer is coming in his own way, and will arrive at his own time, and will make all things work together for good. It is by this practical action that the Christian faith saves itself from the futile, sometimes malicious, charge of being but a sentiment. It inspires, it invigorates, it makes men; it has made some men forget the weight of the burden in the growing strength of their confidence. Any religion born at Athens or born in Bethlehem that can do this is a religion that the world will never willingly let die.

We must always distinguish between historical providences and personal discipline. Some men are born in rough ages. We cannot fix the time of our birth, the period within which our little life shall revolve among the visible stars. It was hard to be born when nation rose against nation and kingdom against kingdom; to be born amid earthquakes and famines and pestilences and fearful sights and great signs: it would have been better to have been born at midnight, with a star to watch the birthplace, and angels to sing the natal song, and quiet shepherds to come and knock at the mother's door and make inquiry about the child. But we cannot fix the time of our nativity. Circumstances develop men, test their quality, shape their course, call them to their destiny. We cannot overget the fixed environment of life. We may accept it, make the best of it, pray to take hold of it and use it aright; but there it is. It is right that lions should be born in jungles; it would be a misfit if tigers were born in the nursery where the children have their toys and their letters. The ages have been mapped out, and the earthquakes have been set down; every famine and pestilence has been in the counsel and view of God, and all the births that were to take place under circumstances so disturbed have all been matters of the divine providence. What wonder if some men should feel that they have been born a day too late? When they read of what happened when the sea was a battlefield and the land an Aceldama, the soldier starts up in them and says, Why was I not born then? To-day I am dying with dotards, passing the food to toothless lions. But these misfits are not so numerous as one might imagine from those who suppose they could have done better if they had been born last century. They might have done better then; certainly they could hardly do less and worse than now.

What is the inspiring comfort? What is the doctrine that lifts this exhortation above rhetoric, and fixes it amongst the severest realities of history and logic? Jesus Christ explains: he says—You are to be superior to the action of events, because they do not hinder the coming of the Son of man:—"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and glory." That is the comfort. Only that which hinders him can or ought to hinder us. How is the night? Stormy. At what rate drives

the wind? A hundred miles an hour or more, and blows from the cold east with intolerable bitterness. Are there any stars alight? Not one. Is all over? From a human point of view, yes, all is over. What is that which breaks through the cloud? It is an image like unto the Son of man. How it brightens, how it enlarges, how it descends; how all things are afraid of it that are hostile to it, and how all praying life leaps to greet that image as if by an instinct of kinship! In that doctrine Christianity stands. If anything can keep back the Son of man from coming in power and great glory, then the case of the Church is lost. But if nothing can happen to hinder Christ, nothing can happen to hinder the Church. When Omnipotence is foiled, then strike your tents, and flee away with the heels of cowards; and let the universe watch those feet as they run, while you are asking for some woman to house the white-livered deserters. So we now interpret Providence as to comfort ourselves and call ourselves to discipline. So, when nation rises against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and great earthquakes are in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights and great signs are all operating, we simply open our eyes and say, Has the sun risen this morning? Yes. Then all is well; if the sun is not hindered, peace will not be hindered. When there is great upset and fear in the land, we have simply to say as Christian men, Are the seasons still revolving? Do seedtime, and summer, and harvest, and winter still appear in the land? Do they come in regular order? Yes. Then be quiet; pray on; you may even sing a little: if the four seasons have not been hindered in their course, have not fled away in fear and lost the path by which they have come these thousands of years to the earth, then pray without ceasing; God is master, the Lord reigneth.

This was the reasoning of Christ:—Because all these things spoken of in the text could not hinder his own advent, therefore men were to lift up their heads, and look up, and know that their redemption was drawing nigh. In that hour all self-dependence was to be renounced:—"Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." Do not trouble your memory to reckon

up dates and facts and circumstances and phenomena that you can shape into a reply; have no words, and thus be more eloquent than if you had charged your memory with all the riches of rhetoric and eloquence. So he says to preachers: If you are only preaching what you have learned in the study, you will never preach: what you have to do is to read the Scriptures, get into the spirit of them, pray night and day as strength will allow, and then stand up and I will do the rest. But men will "prepare" themselves. Self-control is to be exercised:—"In your patience possess ye your souls." [R.V.—"By your patience ye shall win your lives."] In your doing nothing you are doing everything; in a negative position you are achieving affirmative results; in your patience hold ye your souls, keep your souls quiet, and if you have not patience no matter what genius you have. There is a time when virtue is everything; there is another time when grace is larger than virtue. Patience is a grace. Self-culture is to be a law:—"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." Do not be beasts, do not be mere animals, do not be mere eaters and drinkers, gluttons and winebibbers; let the spirit be larger than the body; live in your soul, and for your soul, and through your soul; then the word "unawares" can never happen in the journal or the diary of the true heart.

Then comes a sublime injunction:—"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." That is what we are called upon to do—to watch. He may come from the east, from the west, from the north, from the south. May he come from the north—that north which never held the sun, but only looked at the south burning with his majesty? Yes, he may come from the north. May he come from the east, whence the cold wind blows? Do not speak of the cold wind. The dawn comes from the east; day is born orientally. Speak no more of the biting wind, but think of the summer dawn. When may he come? Now. How may he come? No man can tell. What should we do? Be ready—be caught on our knees.

Chapter xxii. 3.

"Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve."

SEEKING OPPORTUNITY.

HERE is a vivid instance of the craft of that old serpent the devil. He did not seek out a stranger, a prominent politician, or statesman, or leader of the general public; he entered into one of the twelve. We should recognise ability wherever we discern it. Here is a lesson for the Church. Only one of the twelve could have done this work. A singular qualification for mischief indeed, a qualification undeniable; that which ought to have been the secret of the best influence was the secret of the worst. It is always one of two things with this Christianity: it is our life, or it is our death; it is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death, just as we may appropriate and use it. Let us give credit even to evil ingenuity. Satan entered into one of the twelve. He always wants to do that: to get hold of a nominal Christian, that is his supreme intent and desire. Nobody can hurt Christ so much as one who professes to follow him. It does not lie within the scope of so-called infidel power to hurt the Son of man in the sense in which he can be hurt by those who have touched his dear hand, and joined with him at least nominally and apparently in tenderest communion and prayer. What a lesson is this to the Church! How the Church should be continually on its guard! A man who would be of no account were he outside the Church becomes a rather important factor by the very incident of his being within the Church. We get influence from our environment which does not properly belong to our personality. The whole stress of the terms is upon "being of the number of the twelve." Only break up that unit, make it into an odd number, let there be schism at the heart. As for you, quoth the devil, discoursing with one another in market-places, speculating, inventing, dreaming, blaspheming, it amounts to nothing; last

night I caught a Christian at his prayers, and sowed black seed in his heart, to-morrow there will be a harvest. Think of the doubt of a Christian! From my point of view a Christian should never doubt. Let me tell you why. If Christianity were a matter of intellectual speculation only, doubt would be timely and reasonable and inevitable; but Christianity is not wholly speculative, Christianity is profoundly, essentially, eternally moral. Why do you not hold on there? If you have doubts about the moral content and purpose of Christianity, then you are not of the number of the twelve; but if you are of the number of the twelve whatever speculative difficulties you may have should be lost in your moral enthusiasm, that is to say in your spiritual conviction regarding the righteousness and beneficence of God and Christ.

People will not take hold where they can. Is it an infirmity of the mind or an infirmity of the body that men will allow themselves to be led about in places where there can be no immediate certainty? The infinite never can be expressed in the terms of the finite: it is not the infinite that is to blame. You cannot put the ocean into any vessel that man ever made: it is not the fault of the ocean that it cannot be so included and contained. Why dwell upon these matters that lie away innumerable miles from life's tedious, dreary, suffering road? If any man have pinions strong enough to fly through these infinite firmaments, do not hinder him; the most of us, however, must hold on to commandments, beatitudes, duties, and responsibilities: and of God's goodness I have never had the shadow of a doubt. There I stand. If I had read about it, or listened to some high and eloquent defence of it, I might have forgotten what I had read and what I had heard, but I have seen it, known it, lived it; from the very first God has done all things well for me. When he stripped me naked and lacerated me to the bone, it was well, it was right, it was good; when he took me out into the wilderness, and left me there at midnight, it was for my benefit; I cried against him then, and vehemently complained, and said, The Lord hath forgotten to be gracious: I was wrong, wholly, absolutely wrong. When he dug the first grave under my very hearthstone, I said, Can this be kindness? can this be love? God does not expect you to turn the grave into a garden the very first day; he gives you

time and space, and sets life before you in new perspectives and distances and colours, and then you go back and say, Where is that grave? and, lo, you need not make a garden of it, for God has done that already. Why not then cling to this? What can the most of us know about high terms in speculation, so-called philosophy, and the higher thought? There may be men who have rights on these elevations, and we should be foolish to dispute those rights; but no man has a right to take from me my own recollection of God's goodness to me. Every Christian should say that about his own case. Let me repeat, therefore, that if Christianity were purely intellectual, imaginative, ideal, or speculative men might have a thousand doubts, and have them naturally and justifiably; but seeing that it is moral, practical, beneficent, seeing that there is something we can lay hold of and testify about clearly and with a good conscience, we should hold fast there, and the rest shall be revealed and declared as we may be able to bear it.

Why are we of the number of the twelve? The answer ought to be that we may help Christ, co-operate with Christ, make Christ better known, represent Christ, so much so that men coming to us may as it were come to the Lord himself. Be ye imitators of God, be ye imitators of Christ. The word "imitators" we do not like, but it is the right word. If we first of all impoverish terms of their meaning, and then deride them, it is not the terms that are to blame, but our ill-treatment of them. To imitate it now means to affect, to endeavour to produce a kind of similitude; it means also to appear to be what we are not in reality: that is the corrupt meaning of the word imitation; but the Revised Version has restored that word to its right place, and now we read, "Be ye imitators," of God, of Christ, of truth. The question which we shall have to decide is this, whether we shall use our influence for good or for evil. If Christians are doubting God, if Christians are speaking coldly about inspiration and spiritual enthusiasm and duty, the world cannot be expected to take up these great themes and glorify them. Why not stand a little aside for a time? why not cease to be of the number of the twelve until certain doubts be removed, or a new position can be taken up rationally and strongly? There need be no sense of exclusion

or excommunication on the part of others. This may be a duty which a man owes to himself. I could conceive it perfectly possible for a minister to say: I want a month or a year alone; I want to be away among the hills or on the sea, far hence, where I know no man's language round about me, that I may think it all out again, and mayhap I shall come back and ask for the old mantle and the old position, that I may declare God with new influence, new emotion, and new energy. That man is not to be banned as an infidel or a traitor; he is rather to be regarded with admiration as one animated by the spirit of stewardship and faithfulness. Every man's life should be his own Bible. Why ask questions about other people's doubts and faith? What of your own soul, your own life? Have you forgotten your own yesterdays? You do not need your faith to be supported by a buttress on the outside, you only need to remember God's goodness to your own life in the past, and you shall have lifting up and strengthening within. That is the abiding and gracious power.

What did Judas do under this bad inspiration? He "sought opportunity." That is a simple expression, but there is a whole tragedy in it. What self-involution, what scheming, what balancing of probabilities, what shading and blending of colours, what weighing with the right hand and weighing with the left hand and deduction of inferences! What a recall of Christ's methods—when he rises, whence he travels, what he does, what he prays; what is his weak point: at what time can I catch him? He "sought opportunity." Whoever does that will find it. Whoever seeks for the door of hell will find it. We read of Herod, "when a convenient day was come." Have you sufficiently lingered upon that word "convenient"? It is a suggestive word—when things come together, from east and west, from north and south; when circumstances are made to focus—"when a convenient day was come." We make our opportunities, we make our conveniences; we write our diary so that it may lead up to the day of red murder. What do you want to make, what do you want to create? You can do it. Happily, this doctrine holds good not in the evil direction alone, but in the beneficent and sacredly happy direction of the soul. We can make opportunities for doing good; we can put ourselves in the way.

We understand how certain actions move, and how certain events develop, and we can throw ourselves by skilful accident into the way of doing good without at all appearing to be aggressive or obtrusive. We could create sweet incidents. If we liked we could almost any day meet poverty and help it without poverty ever suspecting that we have been parties to a gracious conspiracy. There may be those who go out hooded and ulstered, saying, Where art thou, poverty? I want thee: stand up, grim spectre, and let me talk to thee! I hope poverty will have more sense than to do so!

There is a way of seeking an opportunity, as who should say, Behold! good day! and good luck to thee! I have had sweet fortune singing to me, and helping me, and it may be that in this happy chance I have an opportunity of sharing something with thee. You can make the opportunity; you can be standing in the road; you can be saying, It was on this path that the awful incident occurred, there may be some repetition of it; I intend to be close at hand, so that if any chance be given me of doing good I may do it with both hands earnestly. And all this you can say to your own soul and to God. It is not to be written large or spoken aloud; it is to be a soliloquy that the soul shall turn into music. Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and gave thee no bread? When saw we thee athirst, and gave thee no drink? When? O lying soul! O dead, dead conscience! The Christ was standing beside you all the time, and you mistook him for a stranger, for the gardener, perhaps for an enemy: why did you not seek opportunity of testing the man's necessity without making him feel it doubly? It might have been worth while to risk something if haply you could have identified the Son of God in a brother man. It is worth while to burn this kind of excuse out of the Church, that if men had only known, they would have done wonders. Why did they not know? Why did they not inquire? "The cause which I knew not I searched out." You might have given that minister something that would have saved him from broken-heartedness. If you had known, you would. No, you would not, thou wicked servant! You might have known. And you, minister, might have helped some poor creature in darkness, and poverty, and misery, if you could

have withdrawn yourself from what to you was luxurious enjoyment, it may be of a literary or intellectual kind. Do not say you would have gone if you had known; it might have been worth while for you to have tried to know. So if you want opportunities to do people harm, you can have them. You can find fault with any man. I find now that it is supposed to be as near as possible to having heaven, that "nobody was ever heard to breathe one word against him." That was how it was with the Apostle Paul! Nobody ever spoke a word against the Apostle Paul, either about his bodily presence or his public speech. Paul would not have had a heaven of that kind; he would not have had room in it. No man ever spoke against the apostles, not a breath—O beautiful obscurity, celestial orphanage! Yet this is the highest encomium we can now pass upon men, that we never heard anybody in the world take the slightest notice of them; and there are ministers who say, "We have been forty years together in this town, and never had a cross word." What a miracle! How often have you met? "We have not had many opportunities of meeting." Then why did you not make them, create your opportunities, and test one another's trust, and chivalry, and love? If I could address the mischief-maker, I would speak to him words intended to scorch his insignificance. Do not do harm in your churches, do not make yourselves the mediums of harm-doing and mischief in your churches in London, or in the country, or in the mission-field. Have nothing to do with evil-minded men; seek opportunities for helping one another, and blessing life, and when other opportunities occur, avoid them.

Here is, lastly, an instance of what may be termed indirect mischief: he "sought opportunity to betray him unto them." It is in the last words that we find the indirectness of the mischief. There are plenty of people willing to do the sin if they can escape the crime. There is a temptation to do the first, and seeking to avoid the last. We are willing to point Christ out, and then to run away and leave others to do the murder. That is what you did when you told the young man, *that* was the book that he ought to read. You never saw him again; you knew that if he read that book he was a dead soul. All you did

was to say that the book was interesting, fascinating, and very novel and suggestive, and then you ran away. Are you guiltless of that young man's death? Will he have nothing to say to you when you face one another at the bar? You bought the book, named the book, lent the book, watched the effect of the book, and professed to deplore the result. What if I tell a child that the cup is there which contains a very pleasant draught, and if I run away, and hear afterwards that the child drained the cup and fell down dead, which is the criminal? Can I retain my social status and respectability, and allow the blackness of infamy to fall upon the name which I cursed? There is nothing so easy for Judas to do as to point out to others how murder may be done, how vulgarity may be perpetrated, whilst he himself escapes in darkness. He does not escape long; the Lord is against him, and the Lord will bring him to judgment, the Lord will avenge his own cause.

What we have to do is to support Christ, uphold Christ, and to do this by the eloquence of example as well as by the eloquence of speech. Can we all be perfect? Certainly not, but we can want to be perfect, aim to be perfect; we can desire above all other wishes to be imitators of God and of Christ Jesus, and the bent, the trend, of the mind will be accepted as an actual fact. O blessed Saviour, keep us from betraying thee, from pointing out any weakness, even in thy poorest followers, over which the scorner can rejoice and the mocker can be glad with malignant joy. May we be solicitous to find or make opportunities for doing good, speaking good, and being good. May we know that we do not represent ourselves, but that we represent thee. O thou Man, wounded in the right hand, and in the left hand, and in both feet,—thou Son of man, whose temples bled under the piercing thorns, may we know that we represent thee, and may every unkind speech, or word, or thought, or evil deed, be felt by us to be a sharp sword thrust into thine own heart. Thus keep thy Church, thou who didst buy it with thy blood!

Chapter xxiii. 8-11.

"And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate."

DIVINE RESERVE.

ALL subjects reveal themselves according to the mental mood in which they are examined. This is true in every ramification of life. Men's decisions are influenced by the state of mind in which they receive either evidence or sensations. With regard to the external universe, for example, if it is surveyed when the heart is agitated with sorrow, it fails to produce those impressions which majesty and beauty naturally convey. When the landscape is gazed upon by a mind free from anxiety it elicits feelings and utterances accordant with its own gaiety or grandeur; whereas, when the spirit is "wounded," or crushed with care, the landscape is to it but a cemetery, and the brightest star but a torchlight to the tomb. The same principle is illustrated in the diversified estimation of personal character: urge one man to suspect another, and in all probability the party so urged will imagine that he sees reason to justify the advice. Words will be twisted—actions will be misconstrued—and the very glance of the eye will be made to confirm the impression that the man is a decidedly suspicious character. Instruct another that the very same man is a trustworthy friend, and, in all likelihood, his words, actions, and glances will be made to concur in verifying the commendation. Such is the immense influence which mental moods exert on human reasonings and judgments. That which is looked for is found, or thought to be found. The same person or principle examined through the respective media of

sympathy and antipathy, will reveal aspects the most different. It is of vital importance to remember this fact in all our investigations of creeds, or balancings of contradictory evidence, so that we may escape both the traductions of prejudice and the blindings of partiality. The non-recognition of this truth has induced the grossest misrepresentations of social life, of individual belief, and of denominational doctrine. Each man is apt to consider his own mental mood right, and to be deficient in charity towards the contrary mood of his fellow-student, or fellow-labourer. Seeing, therefore, that our mental conditions act so powerfully on all the developments of life and thought, it becomes us to watch them with a jealous eye, and to bring our minds into continual contact with the divine Purifier and Teacher. Thus much, however, is general, and simply introductory to the sublime particular truths which this remarkable passage is so eminently fitted to teach.

The divine being discriminates our mental moods. Apparently, Herod was in a pleasing state of mind. Superficial observers would have been delighted with his animated and cordial bearing. What could be more gratifying to Christ than that Herod was "exceeding glad" to see him? There was no royal hauteur—no cold rebuff—no vengeful triumph. Why then that awful silence? Why those sealed lips? Could Herod have done more to conciliate the favour of his renowned prisoner? Was it not an act of incomparable condescension for Herod to wear a smile in the presence of a reputed blasphemer and seditionist? For Christ's significant reserve there must be some peculiar but satisfactory reason. It was not fear of the judge, for he was the judge's Creator and Sovereign; it was not contempt, for he entertains a just regard for all the creatures of his hand; it was not constitutional sullenness, for none could be more open and engaging than he; it was not consciousness of guilt, for his most rancorous foes failed in their attempts at crimination. Why, then, did Christ thus treat a man who was "exceeding glad" to "see him"? The only satisfactory answer which we can suggest, is that Herod's gladness did not arise from a proper cause; or, in other words, was no true index to his mental mood. Christ looked deeper than the smile which lighted Herod's countenance,

or the mere blandishment of his manner; he discriminated the mood of mind, and acted accordingly. Christ was not misled by external appearances, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." "For thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men." "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." Christ here displayed his divinity; his all-searching eye penetrated the recesses of the monarch's heart, and noted every passion which surged there; there was no escape from that glance to which the "darkness and the light are both alike"! There is something in this thought calculated to awaken most earnest solicitude regarding our mental moods: the smile does not necessarily reveal the true intellectual condition; nor does "exceeding gladness" always indicate genuine sincerity, or a lofty intelligence. Consider this well: your earnest gaze—your profound attention—your sparkling eye, may not convey a correct impression of your moral or mental state! We cannot infallibly decide by exterior manifestations, however pleasing or hopeful: but know this for an eternal certainty, that the divine Being discriminates your mental moods, analyses your conduct, and understands your motives! Every thought that flashes across the intellect, every vision that enchants the fancy, every emotion that swells the heart, is most surely known in heaven! God knoweth your thought "afar off"; ere it is fully matured in your mind, it is transparent to his! Sublime, yet overpowering, is the fact that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom you have to do"! That there is a dread Being in the universe who watches all the evolutions of life, all the processes of thought, and all the executions of will, is a truth less terrible in its abstract grandeur than momentous in its moral suggestiveness. Ever to be overlooked, ever to have an eye resting on the springs and outworkings of existence, never to have a moment perfectly to one's self, is surely sufficient to prove that man is no trifle—that life is a stupendous and glorious reality —that human deeds are not mere bubbles on the wave—that human responsibility is a fact, and that retribution is an unalterable certainty!

Certain mental moods deprive men of the richest blessings of

Christianity. Of this proposition the text supplies a striking proof and illustration. Had ever man a better opportunity of hearing words of eternal life than Herod had? The divine Teacher was before him—the Man who could have opened his eyes to the grandest scenes, and poured into his ear the sublimest strains—the Man who could command the resources of infinite intelligence, and thrill the heart with the gladdest tidings: and yet that opportunity was unimproved—that memorable meeting a blank! But why so? Why that solemn silence on the part of Christ? Because of Herod's mental mood. The judge wished his curiosity gratified; he had heard of the great wonder-worker, and longed to behold his feats of skill, or his displays of power. Christ knew the treatment proper for the oblique-minded judge, and acted accordingly:—he would not work miracles to gratify a king; he would smile on a child, or dry the tear of misery, but he would not court the applause, or solicit the patronage, of royalty. To whom, then, will the Lord Jesus deign to reveal himself in tender speech or loving vision? Is there any intellect on whose conflicts with scepticism he will bestow his attention? Is there any heart on whose strugglings with sin he will lift up the light of his countenance? Since he was silent before Herod, will he be communicative to any of his creatures? He shall answer for himself: "To this man will I look." Suppose the divine Speaker had paused here, what inquisitiveness and suspense would have been occasioned! "To this man"; to which man, blessed Lord, wilt thou look? To the man who has slain kings, and wandered to the throne of power through the blood of the warrior and the tears of the widow? To the man who has enrolled his name among the proudest of conquerors? To the man who boasts attachment to the cold exactitudes of a heartless theology? To the man arrayed in purple, and enshrined in the splendour of a palace? Is this the man to whom thou wilt look? Nay! 'Tis a grander spectacle which attracts the divine eye:—to the man "that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." Here then we have two conditions of divine communion, viz., contrition and reverence: apart from these there can be no spiritual fellowship. In Herod these conditions were not found; hence Christ was dumb. So with us: if we would truly worship God we must fulfil the conditions herein demanded. Would ye

commune with the eternal spirit of the universe? Be contrite and reverent! Would ye walk in the light of the divine eye? Be contrite and reverent! Would ye understand the meaning of the divine will? Be contrite and reverent! Would ye find in the Bible words of hope and joy and love? Be contrite and reverent! "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

Here is presented a truth of solemn importance; viz., we may be self-deprived of the richest blessings of Christianity. Certain men leave the house of worship as they enter it: they carry no heavenly spoil to their homes: they have no expanding of heart, no illumination of mind: and why this leanness? It is true they reproach the minister for want of energy or skill—they rail against the arrangements of the sanctuary—they complain that there is "no food for the soul," but they forget the fact that spiritual improvement is contingent on the conditions of reverence and contrition. I would ask such whether they are sure, beyond all misgiving, that their spiritual dwarfishness is attributable solely to the inefficiency of the pulpit? I would adjure them by the living God to pause ere they accuse any of his ministers of the stunting or starvation of their souls. I would charge them by the solemnities of an eternal destiny to beware lest they seek to remove their guilt to the account of the innocent! Is it likely that such men can be profited in sanctuary service? All the week long they toil for earthly possessions—their energies are engrossed in "buying and selling, and getting gain"—on the morning of the Lord's day they hurriedly wash the gold-dust from their busy fingers, and, while yet the din of commercial life rings in their ears, they hasten to the gates of Zion! They have had no secret preparation of heart—they have not in the calm of solitude invoked the pardon or the guidance of the Lord—they trust all to the excitement of the occasion—and if their animal impulses are not aroused, they complain of the feebleness of the ministry! Can we wonder that God is dumb before such men? Can we wonder that they have no relish for simple and quiet devotion? Can we wonder that to them there is no music in the

supplication of saints, and no beauty in the tear of penitence? Can we wonder that the heaven is as brass to their heartless formalities of worship? Nay! God is ever silent before such men: he meets them on their own ground: he judges them by their own spirit. If men would carefully prepare their minds ere entering on the exercises of the temple, instead of panting for displays of human genius, they would feast on the devotional part of the service—God would deign to speak to their waiting hearts, and they would leave the sanctuary fertilised and refreshed by a baptism of blessing!

I may enumerate a few classes of hearers, whose mental moods deprive them of spiritual enjoyment:—

(1) Men of violent personal antipathies.—Such persons confound the minister with his message; so that if any whim has been assaulted, or any favourite dogma contravened, they forthwith resort to misinterpretation—they turn every appeal into a personality—and that which was intended as a blessing they pervert into a curse! God will not commune with them: they fulfil not the condition of fellowship—they are neither contrite nor reverent—and Christ answers them nothing! All our paltry and miserable prejudices must be renounced ere we can rise into the loftier regions of spiritual manifestation. It is beneath our dignity as immortal beings to suffer our minds to be warped or poisoned by antipathy; let us rather cultivate such a reverence for truth as shall bear our souls far beyond the polluting touch of prejudice or bigotry.

(2) Men of large speculative curiosity.—Herod belonged to this class. They wish to pry into the secrets of the Infinite: not content with the ample disclosures which the divine Being has graciously granted, they would penetrate into the deepest recesses of his nature, and scale the loftiest altitudes of his universe. They conceive a philosophic dislike for the commonplace truths of Christianity; and regard with patronising pity the minister who lingers on the melancholy hill of Calvary. Such men would understand all mystery: they would break the silence of the stars, or detain the whirlwind in converse: they would summon angels from their high abode and extort the secrets of heaven—

they would even dare to cross-examine the Deity himself on the propriety of his moral government! God will answer them nothing. He will meet them with a reserve more terrible than an utterance of thunder, and cause their souls to quake, in a silence which was never broken but by their own presumptuous voice! Were men content to approach the volume of Inspiration with a simple desire to know the truth in relation to themselves, God would shine upon the page, and make it radiant with the most glorious manifestations of his goodness and mercy; but when they open the Bible for purposes of mere speculation and debate, the music of his voice is not heard, nor the majesty of his presence revealed! Wouldst thou behold the King in his beauty? Let thine heart be contrite. Wouldst thou hear his paternal utterances? Be reverent and humble! While curiosity amuses itself with propounding questions, Faith revels in the green pastures of positive blessing; while the carnal mind seeks after the sensuous, Hope regales itself on the anticipation of future and endless felicity! Let ours be the wisdom of attending to the revealed, and waiting with patience the sublime development of infinite purpose and power.

(3) Men who accept rationalism as their highest guide.—They reject all that reason cannot comprehend. Their own intellect must see through every subject, otherwise they consider it as worthy only of repudiation. They read the New Testament as they would read a work on mathematics, or a treatise on physical science, expecting demonstration of every point. Such men leave the Bible with dissatisfaction. Christ treats them with silence: their flippant questions elicit no response: their feeble reason plunges in hopeless confusion;—Infinitude refuses to be grasped in a human span, and Eternity disdains to crowd into one little intellect its stupendous and magnificent treasures. The mere rationalist is denied fellowship with God: so long as he defies reason, God will be dumb before him: he may utter the most pretentious claims, and make the most philosophic professions of attachment to truth, but he who reads the darkest secrets of all hearts is not to be deluded by lingual protestations or exterior show. Reason has its own peculiar province which it may cultivate to the utmost; but when it would seek to trespass its

appointed boundary God awards it the terrible rebuke of divine silence!—He answers it "nothing."

(4) Men who delight in moral darkness.—Such men have no objection to theological discussion;—they may even delight in an exhibition of their controversial powers, and, at the same time, hate the moral nature and spiritual requirements of the gospel. So long as attention is confined to an analysis of abstract doctrines they listen with interest, but the moment the gospel tears away the veil from their moral condition—reveals their depravity—upbraids their ingratitude—smites their pride—and shakes their soul with the assurance of judgment and eternity, they sink back into sullenness, they take refuge in infidelity, or they curse and blaspheme! Your Herods care not for moral betterance;—they wish their fancies gratified—they desire their questions answered, but they persist in following the devices of their imagination, and imprisoning themselves in the bond-house of bestial passion.

Men so deprived resort to opposition. "And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate." This is a striking illustration of the manner in which the truth has been treated in all ages. Men have approached the Bible with foregone conclusions, and because those conclusions have not been verified they have revolted, and assumed an antagonistic attitude. The course of reasoning has been this:—Here is a book professing to have come from God; if it is truly divine it will contain such and such doctrines, but if it is an imposition those doctrines will not be represented. Against such reasoning we must carefully guard; the argument would stand more correctly thus;—God has presented this book to the human race; whatever it contains must be founded in wisdom and goodness, whether we comprehend it or not. Man has no right to assume anything in reference to a divine revelation: such is our intellectual and moral constitution that it is utterly impossible for us, *à priori*, to determine what kind of revelation God should grant. It is a matter about which we can have no conception;—but now that we are in actual possession of the book we presume to dictate what it should have been! Amazing presumption! Merciful indeed

is the divine Being, or he would blast with death the miserable quibblers who audaciously question his wisdom! Shall we suggest improvements in the constitution of suns and their attendant orbs? Shall we remould the great fabric of the universe? Shall we impose nobler laws on the organism of nature? Shall we accelerate the majestic march of the seasons? Why not? If men are wiser than God—if men know better than their Maker the kind of revelation needed—if men can criticise the moral government of the Eternal—if they challenge the Infinite to debate the spiritual economy he has developed—why should they not intermeddle with the minor arrangements of the physical creation? It were easier to add splendour to the sun—to increase the universe—to extend infinitude—to prolong eternity, than for the unaided intellect of man to have determined the nature and limits of a divine revelation!

As Herod expected to have his curiosity gratified by the disclosures and miracles of Christ, and resorted to opposition because his expectations were disappointed, so in modern times men have formed certain notions of what a divine record should be; and because these notions are not recognised by the Bible they complacently decide that their judgment is correct, and that the Bible is an error. This is the secret of much of the infidelity which has prevailed in all ages—the out-growth of pride which God has mortified. Infidels seek to destroy the Book which does not contain what they have imagined was necessary: when they open the Bible they cannot discover the cause of the Christian's gratitude and exultation; no voice of gladness appeals to their ear; no solution of the problems which perplex the ingenious is given; to them the prophets and apostles are dumb, or, if they speak, it is in tones of reprehension and warning! How so? Because it is written, "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright. With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself unsavoury." Thus, God reveals himself according to the mental mood of the party desiring a revelation. To the penitent thief in the agonies of crucifixion he addressed the promise of eternal life, but in the presence of the marvel-loving tetrarch, though arrayed in robes of judicial

authority, he embodied a silence more appalling than the solemn stillness of the untrodden desert! What was the consequence? Opposition, mockery, torture! The disappointed and chagrined Antipas resorted to the lowest form of vengeance; he yielded to the petulance of his temper, and sought relief in the display of bitter and malignant scorn.

Ample illustration of the proposition might be adduced from the history of infidelity, bigotry, and persecution; but instead of lingering on that, we hasten to indicate the practical bearing of the thesis on the matter more immediately in hand. As men responsible in some degree for the dissemination of Christian truth, it is important to understand how we can best fulfil our mission. In prosecuting this inquiry let me remind you of two things:—

(1) That the Bible is God's appointed representative.—What Christ was to Herod, the Scriptures are to us, viz., the embodiment of divine truth and love. We have this representative in our dwelling-places—we have it in our native tongue—it is a great national fact. We can retire from the din of secular life into the calm of our secret chamber, and there commune with this divine guide. Though we have not the personal presence of Christ, we have what is only one degree less valuable—the intelligible record of his life and will. His Spirit is there embodied, and that Spirit will reveal himself according to our mood of mind: two men representing contrary states of feeling may find in the same chapter thoughts the most different:—the contrite and reverent Christian will find instruction, comfort, hope—while the wonder-seeking Herod will find, as it were, words of fire, or a blank heart-dismaying silence! Let me adjure the teachers of the young to make this record their constant study; other books may be read as subsidiaries, but the Bible must ever remain supreme as a volume for study. Borrow light from every quarter —roam in every realm in quest of illustrations—make every incident useful as an encouragement or a warning—from history, poetry, travel, and biography, bring fact and metaphor, but I charge you in the name of Christ, and in the prospect of eternity, to regard the Volume of Inspiration as the "chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." Imagine not that you have

sounded all the depths or grasped all the amplitudes of this great Book—the greater your genius the more prolific of thought it will appear; and in proportion to the vigour of your piety will it flow with the water of life! The very fact of our having the Bible involves a tremendous responsibility. Christ is in our house: he will speak to us if we properly address him. The man who neglects the Bible, neglects Christ, and deprives himself of the countless and inestimable advantages attendant on fellowship with God!

(2) That the Bible must be approached in a sympathetic spirit.—Would you gather from its pages "thoughts that breathe"? Come with an earnest mind, humbly seeking divine illumination, and your desire will become reality! God will approve your aim, and angels may be missioned to quiet your quivering hearts and thrill you with immortal thoughts. Blessed is the reverent student of this Holy Book;—he never opens it without being charmed with its beauty, fired with its ardour, soothed by its tenderness, and transported by its visions of glory! In his eye the light of other literature is but the dimness of a rushlight compared with the overpowering splendour of the sun in his might! To his ear other words are harsh and discordant contrasted with the melodious flow of supernal song. Do you complain that to your investigations the Bible yields but poor returns? I blame your spirit. Do you allege that general literature is more enchanting to your mind? I blame your spirit. When the spirit is out of sympathy with God and truth, no book is so difficult as the Bible to understand; it is all mystery, dark as starless midnight—voiceless as the silent grave. But when the heart is contrite, the vision is quickened to behold a lustre dazzling as the purity of God.

"Wondrous things" may we behold in God's law if we study it in the right mental mood. In fact, all nature is vocal to the ear of the true student;—there is a voice in the opening year, in the budding spring, in the glorious dawn, the pensive twilight, the star-lit firmament, and the spreading sea—there is a suggestive beauty and an impressive grandeur everywhere; and could we but walk through this material temple with unclouded intellect

and pure heart, we should find a lesson in every breeze, a thought in every atom! But some men find no joy in communing with nature—to them there is no poesy in a flower, and no music in a tempest; the mountain, the landscape, and the sea "answer them nothing,"—all is vacant to their unappreciative eye. So with the great Volume of Revelation, some readers feel not the force of its appeals—to them it is but a common book, which fails to captivate their genius, or entrance their imagination, or subdue their heart. In the plaintive Psalms of Israel's sweet singer no note affects their being—in the fiery majesty of Ezekiel they behold no glory; in the mystic prognostications of Daniel nothing arouses their wonder; in the genial, tender, propitiatory life of Jesus no incident breaks open the fount of their sympathy. Can such men feel any interest in the moral culture of the young? Can such men be expected to support the benevolent institutions of their age? No, is the only answer. Our leaders, ministers, teachers, and supporters must be found in the ranks of the lowly-minded, the contrite, and the reverent. The Herods of society applaud us so long as we can amuse their fancy or gratify their curiosity; but so soon as this power fails they exchange compliment for mockery, and "exceeding gladness" for determined persecution.

Let our prayer be, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," that so our minds may ever be open to the reception of divine light. It is a glorious and a hallowed thing to commune with God. We know the conditions on which this privilege can be realised. Let us tremble lest we forfeit it: for Saul, after he had been deposed from the throne of Israel, and found himself weak in the presence of a mightier foe exclaimed, in an agony we cannot describe, "I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more neither by prophets nor dreams." Time was when God held fellowship with the illustrious potentate; of this he was reminded by the faithful Samuel in this burning question, "When thou wast little in thine own sight wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?" And what is this question but another form of the proposition that contrition and reverence are the necessary conditions of fellowship with the Infinite? Let

us then be lowly, if we would be wise—let us be humble if we would be great—let us worship at the footstool if we would be raised to a throne—let us pray in filial trust if we would awake the responsive sympathy of God. Would we be mighty teachers and preachers of the gospel? Let us commune with Jesus. Would we break the mountains in pieces and turn our enemies to confusion? Let us commune with Jesus. Would we elevate the truth, and drive error from her ramparts? Let us commune with Jesus. Would we silence the miserable reproaches of infidelity? Let us commune with Jesus. Would we make life a joy, death a friend, and the tomb an avenue to glory? Let us commune with Jesus. 'Twill make us strong in battle, swift in race, patient in suffering, and triumphant in death. His thrilling words will awaken our courage—his genial smile will develop our powers—his gracious promises will inspire our hope. We may be rich in grace, valiant in fight, strong in confidence, and successful in labour, if we commune with Jesus.

Chapter xxiv. 50.

"He led them out as far as . . ."

PARTED FROM THEM.

THAT is what he is always doing. In the case of the text the incident was personal and local, but it contains a principle of very wide and gracious adaptation. There is a point in life at which visible leading ceases. It may be at Bethany; it may be at eighteen years of age; it may be at nominal and legal manhood. It may vary according to individuality, but there is the principle:—Now I have brought you out so far, go on. This is education, this is providence. We are almost conscious of the moment when we felt our feet squarely upon the earth, with no one near at hand on whom we could rest for a moment. That was a crisis; that was a fine point in life-education. Some people seem never to get out of leading-strings. They have no faith, no courage, no spiritual consciousness that says, I can do it; I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Where is thy Christ? Taken up into heaven. Canst thou trust an unseen Leader? It is there, at that very point, so vital and so sensitive, that faith comes into full fruition and gracious operation, and man feels that he is no longer dependent upon visibleness and tangibleness, that he has entered upon a higher level of life, that he breathes the air of an infinite and sabbatic climate. Some are farther on than others. This is the difficulty of conducting a thousand men all at once through the same line of argument, because one man is saying, I am not so far on, why do you hasten on? And another man says, if we begin to slow down for those who are weary and weak, Why do you not make more haste in your argument? We have left that point half a century ago; we feel the budding wings, we are about to fly. What is the poor speaker or teacher to do? He must ask his contrastive hearers to throw themselves together and strike an

average line, that they may meet for the moment at one common point and receive the impulse and edification of one common thought.

"He led them out as far as"—— Walking. Is there a more interesting exercise than to teach a little child to walk from one chair to another? The journey is not a very great one to the observer, but it is like going through all Africa to the little traveller. We look upon the exploration with a genial and sympathetic smile, but there is no smile on the child's face; that is about the most solemn moment that has yet taken place in its history. See how it wavers, how it walks, partly with its hands and shoulders, and how it balances itself, and overbalances, and at the last just touches the other shore! Then we say the child can walk by itself; we turn over a leaf in the family book and write that on such a day at such an hour so-and-so began to walk by himself. We leave him there; he must now find his own legs; we cannot always be putting our arms round the little traveller. There comes a point when even the mother must say, Do the best you can as to walking; you know you can walk well enough: come, find your feet! And only in this way can the little traveller be made really to walk; only in this way can toddling become walking and walking become rapid and energetic, only by leaving us can even God himself sometimes make men of us.—"He led them out as far as to——" books, school, initial instruction, alphabets, forms of things. When we have mastered all these, he says, Now go on: you do not need me to sit down with you and spell out the words: we have passed through that process; you must not always be children, you must not always read the words individually, one by one, as who should say, "And—it—came—to—pass." That is not reading. You must learn to cause the words to flow into one another quickly and musically, so as to make one word out of twenty. But much of that has to be done by yourself. Your teacher leads you out "as far as," and then says, From this point go on, because I am going to begin with a number of little children just such as you were twelve months ago, and try to bring them up to this point. So he has parted from you, and you see that kind and degree of teacher no more.—"He led them out as far as to——" business

Then even a father has to say, My boy, carve your own way: I have done all I can for you, I gave you a good schooling, I tried to show you a good example, I have endeavoured to create a very healthy home climate for you, and now it has really come to this that the rest must be done very largely by yourself: pluck up courage, only be of a good courage, and nothing shall stand before you; be faithful, honest, wise, magnanimous, and life will open a road for thee through all its thickets, and we shall meet again in heaven. Our teachers and leaders cannot always be with us. They lead us out as far as to some Bethany, then as to visibleness we say Good-bye! and we return to work with great joy; we are alone, yet not alone; a sweet gracious companionship still drives away all solitariness from the soul, and we live in holy presences. It is withdrawment, not abandonment; it is the ascension of the teacher, that he may become more a teacher still.

This is in common life analogical to what takes place in spiritual life. The Lord leads us out "as far as," and then he says, Now do all you can in your own strength, and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. He has gone that he may be nearer to us; he is higher in the heavens that he may be closer the earth,—a contradiction it may be in mere words and letters, yet they know it to be sweet music who have felt that Christ has gone away, and yet is coming to the soul in every sunbeam and in every quivering of the nightly stars. We are led out as far as—the Bible. But the Bible is not revelation; it is the beginning of the vision; it is the seedhouse, not the garden, the orchard, and the forest. We cannot move without the Bible, and yet it must continually enlarge itself. We can add nothing to the Bible, and yet it can unfold its own wealth, until we exclaim, Behold! these are unsearchable riches. This is the proof of inspiration. It is not a letter, it is a letter only to begin with; the Bible is full of algebraic signs pointing onward to infinity. We do not need any book in addition to the Bible: only those books are good which reproduce the Bible itself in ever-varying forms, and repronounce it in ever-changing but ever-mellifluous and soothing music. Many are accounted heretics who have not the slightest tinge or taint of heresy about

them. They may only be larger thinkers; they may only suffer under the penalty of genius; they may see through the letter much of what the letter means. Each century has its own Bible, each man has his own revelation: and what we want to get at is the point at which all men shall say, This is how God shows himself to me; how various the vision, how wondrous, how panoramic this marvellous apocalypse; we are not divided, in the heart we are really one. We shall never have geometric and mechanical unity, God forbid: we shall have inward and spiritual unity, God speed the day!

"He led them out as far as"——the Church. The Church is not one institution; the Church could not worship under one and the same roof. The Church is invisible; the Church has indeed its outward indications, its geometrical magnitudes, it has even its arithmetical statistics; but all these are useless if they do not point to something invisible, spiritual, immeasurable, ineffable. What part of the Church are you in? You are only in the alphabetic-church, you are only in the vestibule; you may be only in the outer court of the Gentiles. Manifold and infinite is the Church of the Cross, and it should be our business to include men and not to exclude them; let excommunication be the last act, the unavoidable, the tremendous finale.

"He led them out as far as to"——the symbol. It has been beautifully shown again and again that God is always leading us out to something larger than we can express in terms. That idea has formed the basis of many a noble and inspiring discourse in various sanctuaries. Thus to Abraham the Lord said, I will give thee a land flowing with milk and honey—come! If the Lord had said, I will give thee a heavenly Jerusalem, an invisible Canaan "a land of pure delight, where saints immortal reign," the sheik could not have been touched, he did not know that music, there was no home-strain in all that celestial melody; when, however, he heard of a land, a land flowing with milk and honey, a land of acres that bloomed like flowers in the sun, he rose, and then at the last he would not have the very thing he went for. He had grown in the meantime, he had become a larger man, he had become dematerialised, spiritualised, elevated;

his whole imagination had become as a lens through which he saw further distances and brighter glories, and instead of looking upon the green Canaan, growing grass and herbs, he said, I seek a country out of sight. God meant that from the very first, but if at the first he had said that, he would have overpowered the man and left him in bewilderment and dismay. Thus we are led on from point to point, and God has so arranged the economy of life that sometimes we seem to be left to ourselves; as if the Lord would set us a task or lesson in his own Bible, saying, as sometimes a pastor says to an inquirer, Read the third chapter of the Gospel by John, and see me in a week. Thus I have been able to help many inquirers myself, and other pastors have done the same. Instead of sitting down and reading the chapter with the inquirer, we have said, Take it home, read it every word, get it into your heart, talk with the passage and get the passage to talk to you, and then let us meet this day week and compare our investigations, and seek the blessing of God upon our individual and mutual inquiry. So the Lord leaves us to ourselves for long periods or for periods which seem long. Whenever he is absent a moment we think he has gone for ever. There are moments that are eternities: we measure time by the hunger of our love.

Having once had great companionships and noble leaderships, we can never lose them. They are taken away from us as to visibleness, but they are with us as to influence and sympathy. Thus, if we have really lived with any other soul, man, woman, child, friend, teacher, we know what that other soul would say and do under all the changing circumstances of life. What voices we hear, what counsel we receive without words! We say to ourselves, We know what he would say under these circumstances, we know what he would do, or she, under such conditions; he would say, Rise, and shake yourself from this slavery: she would say, Cheer thee: it is nightmare that is now brooding over thy soul and making thee afraid. Oh, poor heart, I have gone from thee as to visibleness, but cry thou mightily unto God, and if in some other world I can help thy prayer I will be with thee evermore. We know what the ascended husband would say; we know what the sainted wife would do: we lived

so long together that there is no longer any mystery as to the counsel that would be given. And if we will only open the ears of our hearts we shall hear music from heaven itself. Thus our friends have withdrawn from us, and yet they come back to us in larger identity; no longer may we shake hands, but evermore we may unite in heart.

We have not been led "as far as" in order that we might change the road, but that we might continue and complete the journey. When men are led "as far as" and then turn their backs upon the road, they have lost their leadership in more senses than one. Go on unto perfection: persevere along this road;—that is the voice of Providence, that is the monition of the higher education. We do not change the doctrine, though we may change its modes of representation. Here again many a man is really speaking larger truth than he himself is quite aware of; here again many a man is supposed to have left the faith when he has done nothing of the kind. He only sees the old truths from a new point, or views them under uncalculated or unforeseen conditions: presently he will see that it is the same mountain, facing north, facing south, having a side that drinks in all the morning light, and another side that drinks in all the evening glory. Let us have larger faith in one another, in our love of truth, in our love of Christ.

"He led them out as far as to Bethany." He would have taken them farther if it had been for their good. At Bethany he "blessed them." Some places seem to double the blessing. The places themselves are memories, pictures, centres of spiritual interest. He led them back to their birthplace, and blessed them; he led them out as far as to the wedding altar, and blessed them; he led them out as far as to their earliest recollection of heavenly visions, and blessed them. He must choose the point of parting. "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." The sentence was left incomplete; the benediction was broken off as it were at a semicolon. "While he blessed them,"—it is as the song of an ascending bird, now so clear, so sharp, so sweet, and now less so, and now—and now—and now—gone!—away into the light, away

to the nativity of the morning, away into heaven! We should bless God for broken benedictions, for incomplete farewells. The way of the going seems to intimate the certainty of the coming: as if Christ had said, You have heard half the sentence now, the other half you shall hear in the morning. Oh, sweet, bright summer morning, we hunger for thee! We are tired of the wild, windy, cold, stormy night!

NOTE.

The Speaker's Commentary says:—"St. Mark does not tell us where the Ascension occurred. Luke tells us afterwards (Acts i. 12) that it took place on Mount 'Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey.' There is no contradiction between the earlier and the later statement of the evangelists. Bethany lay on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, and the way from the village to Jerusalem lay across the mountain. A portion of the mountain may have appertained to Bethany, and may have been called by its name. And St. Luke speaks here with a certain degree of vagueness; he does not actually assert that the apostles were led to Bethany, but 'as far as' (meaning near) 'to Bethany': and his words are therefore satisfied by supposing the Ascension to have taken place somewhere in the neighbourhood of the village. Bethany and the Mount of Olives are similarly associated in Mark xi. 1, as well as in Mark xi. 11, compared with chap. xxi. 37. The traditional scene of the Ascension is one of the four summits of the Mount of Olives, overhanging, and in full view of, the city of Jerusalem, and now covered by the village and mosque and church of the Jebel-et-Tur. The site, however, is too far from Bethany and too near to Jerusalem to satisfy the conditions of the narrative. 'On the wild uplands which immediately overhang the village, he finally withdrew from the eyes of his disciples, in a seclusion which, perhaps, could nowhere else be found so near the stir of a mighty city; the long ridge of Olivet screening those hills, and those hills the village beneath them, from all sound or sight of the city behind; the view opening only on the wide waste of desert-rocks and ever-descending valleys, into the depths of the distant Jordan and its mysterious lake. At this point, the last interview took place. "He led them out as far as Bethany;" and they "returned," probably by the direct road over the summit of Mount Olivet. The appropriateness of the real scene presents a singular contrast to the inappropriateness of that fixed by a later fancy, "seeking for a sign," on the broad top of the mountain, out of sight of Bethany, and in full sight of Jerusalem, and thus in equal contradiction to the letter and the spirit of the gospel narrative.'"—(STANLEY, *Sinai and Palestine.*)

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END OF VOLUME XX.

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